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BITTER SWEETS.

VOL. III.

BITTER SWEETS:

A LOVE STORY.

BY

JOSEPH HATTON.

THE web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues.—SHAKESPEARE.

There is a comfort in the strength of love:
Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would upset the brain, or break the heart.
WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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OF

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BITTER SWEETS:

A LOVE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER PAUL MASSEY'S CONFESSION.

THE mysterious trouble which had fallen upon Oak House was Kate Massey's first taste of real bitters. Her mother would explain nothing; her father was too ill to be questioned. A deep settled mystery had come upon her home, which made it almost unbearable.

The doctor, who had been sent for to see Mrs Massey, was not required by that lady; she rallied, and said she was quite well again, as soon as she reached her own

room after that painful scene which had taken place between her husband and herself.

Mr Massey's condition required every care. Dr Fitz said that had he arrived a moment later, his aid would have been useless.

Mrs Massey received the doctor's report, with a calmness which was very puzzling to the Summerdale practitioner.

"There is something wrong," he said to himself more than once; "something wrong; that woman has altogether changed."

A week had elapsed, and she had only once visited her husband—that dear Paul whom she had loved so fondly, so devotedly.

When she did go to his bedside she inquired after his health in a constrained manner, that was not indifference, and yet could hardly be called affection.

Paul answered her in a low voice, and turned his eyes from her.

Kate did not take her bitters kindly at all. Whoever did take their first dose kindly? Kate shrugged her shoulders at them, frowned at them, cried over them, dreamt of them, and was wretched. She wandered from her father's room to her mother's side, and back again, with appealing, sorrowful looks.

"I am so miserable, mamma," she said at length, "so unhappy."

"My poor child," said Mrs Massey, putting her arms about her.

"I cannot bear it any longer," Kate went on, sobbing, "I will not bear it—I would rather die."

"Katy, Katy, my dear; what is the meaning of this?"

"I know I am only young, mamma, young in years; but I am old in love for you and father; old in your confidence, too. Why is there this mystery?"

"You should not seek to know what your parents do not desire you to know," said Mrs Massey, with more severeness of

manner than she had ever before shown towards her daughter.

“And mamma, dear, is it right that your child should be breaking her heart because you will not let her comfort you? is it right, mamma, that I, who have lived all my little life in the full enjoyment of your dear love, should now be shut out from your heart?”

Kate sobbed convulsively. You see she was a spirited girl, and she had had so many sweets that this first taste of bitters was intolerable to her. She rebelled against it. She spurned Dr Fate's medicine; she would not have it; she threw it from her—she stamped her little feet upon it. But Dr Fate held the medicine to her lips, and she was obliged to take some of it, as everybody is. After the first dose people become used to the noxious draught, and often live long enough to toss it off quite courageously.

We could point to many an emptied vessel of Dr Fate's bitters which we have

quaffed ourselves. Cannot you, *bon ami*? Vessels of all sizes; some of them have held big, double-distilled doses that have almost choked you. Eh? *cher ami*—don't you remember? That big dose of slander; that bitter draught of ingratitude; that nauseating gulp of injustice; that milder dose of pure misfortune. Of course we must submit; it is better that we should have the bitters, in order that we may appreciate the sweets. For Dr Fate administers sweets as well—sweets that are doubly sweet when they come immediately after the bitters. But how should Kate Massey know that bitters were good for her?

“Have patience, my Katy, have patience,” said Mrs Massey, bending over her.

“I cannot, mamma; I have lost all my patience—I feel as if I shall go mad.”

“What shall I do?”

“Do, mamma? Tell me what this trouble is; take me into your confidence

again. You have brought me up to love you, to be interested in all your thoughts, to share all your pleasures, to soothe you when you are sad; and now that I am old enough to feel all this, you put me from you, send me away, shut me from you—just when I would be with you, and creep into your heart.”

“Patience, patience,” was all Mrs Massey could say; “I must have time to think.”

Poor Mrs Massey, she had had plenty of time to think about Paul’s confession. She had scarcely slept a wink since he made it.

At first it was like a horrible dream; then, by degrees, it assumed a dreadful reality. Paul’s rambling words in that illness at Denby; his questions on his recovery; his enforced companionship with Winford Barns; his mysterious obligation to that odious man; his settled melancholy; his total change since his marriage—all were explained.

The man she had worshipped so long:

had not only been meanly jealous of her, but had killed her brother, had slain the man who had rescued him from death.

Oh, it was a terrible blow! "Thank heaven," she said, "Uncle Mountford has not lived to see this day."

Was this a part of her punishment for trifling with the love of a noble heart? Was this the conclusion of that even-handed justice which had begun when death took from her side that dear protector whose wishes she had thwarted? Would she ever recover her punishment? She thought not. She would rather not, but for Kate's sake.

"Why should she care to live now?" she asked herself. "She could never love Paul Massey again. Never!"

And yet she could not tear his image from her heart. She could not blot out the memories of those happy, happy hours which she had spent in his society. She could not forget his many proofs of devoted love; she could not forget how

handsome he was, how noble he looked that day when she consented to be his, wholly.

Then she thought of his sufferings all these years, of his mental agony, wrought up to that maddening pitch when the secret would come forth, when the troubled conscience could bear its load of guilt no longer.

“But she could love him no more,” she thought again, and then she shuddered at Harry Thornhill’s fate, and remembered his last interview with her. How could she love a murderer? Harry struck the first blow. But what was that to the dagger stabs of unfounded jealousy? To think that her Paul—the man of men, the noblest, the truest, the best—should be what he confessed! Oh, it was maddening!

“Mamma, dear,” said Kate Massey, when a few more days had fled, and Dr Fate had compelled her to take his big

dose of bitters without further questioning ;
“ why will you not come to father ? ”

“ I have my own proper reasons for not doing so, my child ; I have told you so before.”

“ You have, mamma, and I promised to wait until you thought it fitting I should know them. I will wait, mamma ; you shall not say I am undutiful again ; but poor father is continually asking for you. There are often tears in his eyes now, and it nearly breaks my heart.”

Mrs Massey remained silent ; but in her heart of hearts she pitied her husband.

“ Mamma, I am sure he is very ill now ; Dr Fitz says he is. And oh, mamma, don't you think it is cruel of you not to come and see him ? ”

“ Kate, I thought I had a promise from you ? ” Mrs Massey replied.

“ Yes, mamma ; but supposing father should die ? And, mamma, though I may promise not to question you, I cannot prevent myself from thinking.”

“And what do you think?” the mother asked.

“I think what I should once have scorned myself for thinking, that you are unkind, that you have forgotten to practise all that love and charity which you have taught me to practise. Do not be angry—I cannot help it—I am so very, very unhappy.”

Mrs Massey thought there was justice in her child's rebuke, and she laid her head upon Kate's shoulder, and gave way to a passionate flood of tears.

Kate put her arms round her mother's neck, and kissed her, and begged for forgiveness.

“Do you forgive me, mamma?” she said, by-and-by.

“Yes, my child, yes,” said Mrs Massey.

“Then forgive father too, whatever he may have done, do, do forgive him.”

Mrs Massey kissed Kate's forehead.

“Come, mamma—come, let us go to him now,” she said, after awhile.

Mrs Massey suffered herself to be led away, and she sat beside her husband, and took his hand in hers, and Katy slipped away, and left them.

“Say it is not true, Paul,” said Mrs Massey, when the door was closed; “say it is false, say it was an accident—anything but what you have said.”

Paul only faintly pressed her hand.

“I have loved you, Paul, so much—so dearly—how can I love you now?”

“I cannot hope that you will,” said Paul in a whisper; “I cannot hope; but bear with me, bear with me, Anna, for a little while.”

“Oh, my poor husband,” said Anna, the last appearance of calmness breaking down, and the tears falling fast, “my poor husband.”

“I could cover my guilt no longer, Anna—it would be told—I had always feared that another tongue would tell the story, but it was decreed that mine should

be blistered with it, and that you should hear it," Paul said, with difficulty, pausing for breath almost at every word.

"Our child, Paul," said Anna.

"Spare her, spare her," was Paul's reply; "let her never know of her father's dishonour. Dear, dear Kate!"

The child became reconciled to her mother again, when Anna continued, not only to visit her father, but to wait upon him, and soothe his pain. "He is my husband, whatever he has done," Anna thought at last; "and he is sick unto death. Though I may love him no more—how can I?—I pray that God may forgive him, and how can I ask for His mercy, unless I forgive him myself?"

So she went to him, and comforted him, and prayed with him; but it seemed as if her heart was severed from him more and more every day, as if her Paul was gone, as if he was part of some happy memory, as if this was some poor sick

sufferer, who demanded her care and succour. And yet she wept over him, and said a hundred times "if it had only been an accident."

Did she love him still? Or did she not? We can hardly answer the question. A noble, true, pure woman, cannot love a guilt-stained man, cannot bend lovingly over hands that have done murder,—unless it be in ignorance of the sin. Anna had loved Paul, all these years, with her whole heart: could the sudden knowledge of the unworthiness of him she had loved change her whole nature?—crush out the light of love which had burned for him only, burned for him always? Anna thought so—when her trust in the man she loved was gone, when his high and noble attributes were torn away, when she could no longer admire and respect him; then it seemed that her love was gone.

We have set down, in this chapter, Anna's tangled thoughts and feelings, her

manner, her words—we have endeavoured to describe the struggle with love, and duty, and honour, and truth; we will not answer for the exact state of her heart. But she had a high sense of religious duty, and she blamed herself for part of the trouble which had fallen upon her. “I ought to have known,” she said to herself, “young as I was at the time, that I was trifling with the love of Harry Thornhill—poor dead, murdered Harry Thornhill!”

Weeks, months passed away, and Mr Massey was still confined to his room. Sometimes he was strong enough to be dressed, and moved into a chair; but the London doctor, and Dr Fitz, had long since prepared Mrs Massey for the worst.

Frank Grey, hearing through persistent inquiry, that Mr Massey was so unwell, had ventured upon making a journey to Summerdale, and had called at Oak House; but only for an hour. He stammered out something about having busi-

ness a few miles distance, which was perfectly true, and that he felt he must take the liberty of calling.

Mrs Massey received him politely, but Frank felt that her manner was cold ; he only saw Kate for a few minutes, and he was grieved that she looked so sad and ill.

Never had the spring flowers appeared so hopeless to Mrs Massey. The snow-drops, drooping above the brown turf in the garden, in company with yellow crocuses, and daffodils, had no charm for her now. She had brought herself, by degrees, to talk with Paul about other subjects than the one which had such terrible possession of her. She had become his careful, tender nurse ; and Kate had recovered back some of her old cheerfulness. She could see how necessary it was that there should be smiles and encouraging words in a sick room, and she could also see that they must come from her. Poor girl ! It was hard for her to bear, after her years of

unalloyed happiness,—this dreadful, mysterious change.

At night, over the kitchen fire, the servants would discuss the master's illness, and invent all sorts of explanations of that never-to-be-forgotten morning, when they heard "that shriek of missuses," and found her in a swoon on the floor. The circumstance was all the more impressed upon them, because the life of Mr and Mrs Massey had been such a calm, happy life, —to all appearance: and they never understood how Mrs Massey could, or why she did absent herself from the sick room of her husband, for days after he was taken so seriously ill, and when she insisted that she was quite well herself, and refused to see Dr Fitz.

The Summerdale people, who learnt all about the mysterious affair, could make nothing of it, and therefore said very little about it. They respected and loved the Masseys, and most of them said the servants had exaggerated what was no doubt a little

quarrel, that would occur in the best-regulated families. The more that was said of it, the more were the virtues and goodness of the Masseys extolled. Oak House had never had such gracious tenants since it had been Oak House.

CHAPTER II.

“OVER THE WAY.”

POOR old Howard had been six months dead; he died full of years and honours, and was buried without much lamentation. It was better that he did not live to discover the wolf which was disguised so effectually by Mr Grainger's art.

The banker was succeeded by his son, so that the name of the firm continued unchanged. Luke had been braced up to something bordering upon activity by the new duties and responsibilities which had fallen upon him; and Mr Mentz did not persuade him to give up his metropolitan journeys. Possessing much of the northern cuteness, with some of the northern carefulness, and all the northern liberality,

London, to Luke, was not the London of Mr Mentz and his late father.

Mr Luke Howard was quite a little fortune to Mrs Hezekiah Stubbs, of South-ampton Street, Strand, with whom he had lodged whenever he visited London. It was more economical, the Tyneborough banker thought, than staying at an hotel; and no doubt he was right, though the expensive dinners in which he indulged every day at The London, fully made up for any saving in "attendance, &c." But then, you see, Mr Howard got all he paid for, and he preferred that it should be so.

It was a bright morning towards the close of December when Mr Howard rung his bell, and requested to see Mrs Stubbs.

That most amiable of lodging-house keepers put in an appearance about half-an-hour afterwards, bustling into the room, all smiles and curtseys, and cap and ribbons.

“Yes, sir; you was good enough to inquire for me. I was afraid of that lobster when Mary took it up, but—”

“I don’t want to see you about the lobster, Mrs Stubbs,” said the lodger, in a loud mellow voice, with just a slight Northumbrian burr; “it’s a] horse of another colour.”

“Thank you, sir; I hope that it will agree with you, sir, and that Mary has waited on you, sir, as she ought; but in these days it is really difficult to know the servint as can be trusted.”

Mrs Stubbs smoothed her apron, and prepared herself to make the most ample apologies to Mr Howard, whatever his complaint might be, for he was a good lodger, and paid promptly.

“All right; all right, Mrs Stubbs; I have no complaint to make, but simply an inquiry.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Simply an inquiry! Who lives in the house opposite?”

“Directly opposite, sir?” inquired Mrs Stubbs, going to the window.

“Yes, the house with the flowers in the upper window.”

“And the dirty blinds?” said Mrs Stubbs, quickly.

“Well, perhaps they are not such white blinds as yours, Mrs Stubbs.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“But never mind the blinds. Who lives there?”

“Mrs Jenkins, sir.”

“What is she?”

“Well, they do say as her husband is a retired captain; but he ain’t never at home, sir; and having a house larger than she requires, she lets her rooms, sir.”

“Very well! Then the lady in black, whom I see sometimes at the window where the flowers are—who is she?”

“That lady has the first-floor front, sir, she has; and a very good person she is, but melancholy. The things that she do give away, really it is almost enough to make

one wish to be poor, though for the matter of that riches ain't my lot, sir."

"Is she married, then?"

"Well, no. It ain't often as Mrs Jenkins has time to come in and have a cup of tea, but she was in my house only the other afternoon, her second floor being unlet, though the 'gentleman is coming home in February; she came in, and we was a-talking about that very subject, sir."

"Well, what did you arrive at?" asked the north-countryman, smiling.

"Well, Mrs Jenkins is inclined to think as she's a widow, though she calls herself Miss."

"Miss what?"

"No, sir; Miss Martin."

"Well?"

"Yes, sir, Miss Martin," said Mrs Stubbs, poking the fire, and sending a cloud of dust over the ornaments which were huddled together on the mantel-shelf.

"Well, Mrs Stubbs; don't you see I want to know all about her?"

“Yes, sir; Mary did say as you had been a-watching of the lady, and—”

“Mary said what?” exclaimed the north-countryman a little impatiently.

“Oh, nothing, nothing, sir. I don’t think I can tell you any more about the lady than I have, sir. She’s been with Mrs Jenkins a very long time. She came one morning when the card was up in the front floor; my rooms were all let at the time; she asked to see the mistress of the house, which it was Mrs Jenkins, of course.”

“Yes, go on, if you please, Mrs Stubbs,” said Mr Howard, sitting lazily astride a chair, and leaning his arms upon the back, so that they comfortably supported his head and whiskers.

“Mrs Jenkins came to the door, and the lady said she had called about the apartments, which Mrs Jenkins forthwith showed to her, and they suited the lady—the rooms are not so good as these—the terms were also satisfactory, and the

lady said she would take them. It was natural, of course, being a single lady and alone, for Mrs Jenkins to have references ; but Miss Martin said, ‘ I have no references to give you ; I am well off, and will pay you in advance, and if you do not like me when I am in the rooms, I will leave without any notice.’ There was something melancholy, Mrs Jenkins said, in the way in which she made this remark, and she pulled out at the same time a purse with so much money in it, that the end was Mrs Jenkins agreed that the lady should have the rooms ; but to this day she knows no more about her than she did at first, which it is, no doubt, very strange.”

“ Very,” said Mr Howard, thoughtfully. “ Don’t you think her a very good-looking woman ? ”

“ Well, she has beautiful eyes, no doubt,” said Mrs Stubbs ; “ but being good is better than being good-looking, and there ain’t a more charitable woman nowhere, though Mrs Jenkins do consider

that the lady is not exactly right in her head."

"Not right; why?"

"No reason in particular, except a sort of look in the eyes that is wild at times; perhaps she's had some great trouble. We all have our trials, sir. It's a singular thing she does on the first of May, sir. She goes out, sir, afore breakfast, long afore breakfast, and she buys a handful of flowers in the Garden, sir—Cov'n Garden—and she shuts herself up, sir, with them flowers, and has nothing to eat all day, sir; nothing from morning to night, sir."

"That is strange, very strange," said Mr Howard, looking towards Mrs Jenkins' first floor front.

"Perhaps it's somebody as died on that day, sir."

"And she's very charitable, is she?"

"Uncommon, sir, uncommon; but it's mostly to females, sir, mostly to females. Mrs Jenkins says the parson—which he don't call on me, being of the dissenting

community—the parson gave her to understand that an institution set up for fallen women, sir, close by where I buys your fish, sir, was begun out of her money, sir, and there is no knowing how much she gives away in money and clothes, agoing about as she does, visiting the poor and sick, and in such places, too, more like one of them sisters of mercy, with their heads tied up, than anything else.”

“Indeed! ah! thank you, Mrs Stubbs, that will do—I felt curious about her, that’s all—thank you;” and Mr Howard relieved his arms of his head, and put upon the latter a short round hat, just when Mrs Stubbs herself intended to have asked a few leading questions on her own account.

“That is all, sir?”

“Yes—thank you, Mrs Stubbs, good morning;” and Mr Luke steered himself leisurely out of the room, thinking more about this strange Miss Martin than ever;

about her big dark eyes, her sadly-beautiful face, her religiously lonely life.

Mrs Stubbs did not lose a moment in putting on her bonnet and shawl, and presenting herself at Mrs Jenkins's door.

"I know it ain't the time to call, Susan Jane," said Mrs Stubbs to the sea captain's wife's eldest daughter, in curls and slippers. "I know it ain't, mornings being busy, of course. But when your business is of importance, any time is suitable for it."

"Certainly, certainly," said a little woman, rushing into the room, with a pair of whity-brown gloves on her hands, the fingers being very much too long; "certainly, when business is of moment, time must give way, that is a very good motto, Mrs Stubbs, and one which I am sure I am only too happy to acknowledge—Susan Jane, go and dress yourself."

This was Mrs Jenkins, a little pinched-

up, sharp, thin, excitable woman, who walked on her toes, and never stood still a moment.

“I don’t know whether you dust in gloves, Mrs Stubbs, or whether you use the naked hand ; but you will perhaps excuse the colour of these kids, and the length of them—I bought them second hand for dusting purposes, and I hadn’t time to take them off.”

“I never dust at all,” said Mrs Stubbs, with dignity.

“Don’t you ; well, not having the collection of ancient china—some of the cups alone worth ten shillings a-piece,—not having, I say, the ancient antiques which deck my drawing-room apartments, of course there is no necessity for your dusting, Mrs Stubbs ; but when the Wittles were in the height of their affluence, my ma always dusted her own antiques, and I don’t think it unbecoming to do the same, setting aside all considerations of the value of the china.”

Mrs Stubbs was at a loss how to reply to her neighbour's retort ; so she merely said some houses were dustier than others, and then got up, and said—

“ Perhaps as there is so much dusting going on, I had better call some other time.”

“ Oh, no, indeed, Mrs Stubbs, no time like the present,” said the sharp little woman, darting at a little accumulation of dust on the cheffioneer, and dispersing it, with a great flourish.

“ Well, it's about your regular first-floor front, and my casual first-floor front,” said Mrs Stubbs at length.

“ Oh, is it ?” said the sharp woman, standing still for nearly a moment. “ I've seen your first floor making eyes at Miss Martin—I have ; only yesterday I said to Susan Jane that Mrs Stubbs's big country first-floor front was a-falling in love with my little black-eyed nun—that was my very remark.”

“ And I fear it's only too true—too true,”

said Mrs Stubbs, "he has been a-talking about her this hour or more, asking all manner of questions."

"Has he? has he? has he?" exclaimed the little pinched-up woman, giving the air three back-handed slaps with her gloved right hand. "He shall never have her—nobody shall have her. Ever since I was at home in the society of my ma's own family, I have never conversed with a lady who had more consideration for the respect due to my name and the rank of the Wittleses and the Jenkinses, though misfortune and a large house has compelled me to let my rooms—no, Mrs Stubbs, if that is your business, it is soon ended."

Mrs Stubbs always did feel inferior to this talking, jumping, jaunty, fierce little woman, and it was no good attempting to be even with her.

"That was not my business," she said.

"Then what is it?"—what is your

business?—the business that was so important, Mrs Stubbs?” asked the little woman appealingly, and hanging down her hands with the long glove-fingers pendant.

“I came, thinking it my duty, Mrs Jenkins, as a neighbour, to tell you my suspicions, and how Mr Howard had been making such inquiries as it seemed to me you should know of; and if you will sit still five minutes I will tell you.”

Mrs Jenkins did not sit still, but Mrs Stubbs gave her a fair outline of the conversation between herself and Mr Howard, upon the strength of their personal interest. The neighbours entered into an alliance, offensive and defensive, in favour of preventing “anything serious” between the two lodgers; for they both agreed that “those big, blue-eyed fellows from the country would go marrying black-eyed ladies, whatever was the consequence; and that, being money on both sides, and good

looks as well, Mr Howard's inquiries boded dangerous symptoms."

These latter were Mrs Jenkins's own words, delivered very deliberately, and repeated with a snap and a flourish that closed the interview.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER VICTIM.

MR LUKE HOWARD was in love, at last; not with Laura Grainger, you perceive; not with the woman who was worthy to have the love of the best man in the world; but with that poor miserable Bessie Martin, whose career would not bear investigation.

Love does go "by contraries" in the strangest fashion, certainly. That mysterious woman, over the way, whom nobody knew anything about, and who certainly cared nothing for Luke Howard, had unconsciously excited that latent passion, which the accomplished and pure-minded Laura Grainger had failed to influence.

Luke had several times thought about

Laura, and wondered if ever she would call at Pentworth now that he was the proprietor. He feared she would not; and of course he was right, though Mr Zebidee Grainger had told him that he should certainly bring Laura with him, as usual.

But we have said that Luke Howard was in love with this mysterious woman over the way, and, as is often the case in sluggish natures like his, the flame seemed to burn with all the more fierceness for having been so long in the kindling.

And why shouldn't he gratify his passion?—that's what he wanted to know, as he walked through the London crowds. The woman was evidently an excellent woman, and pretty too,—why should he not introduce himself to her, and confess his love?—that's what he wanted to know, as he sat smoking on the top of an omnibus. The woman was lonely, and so was he; she had money, and so had he; if she could like him, why shouldn't he marry her?—that's what he wanted to know, as

he sipped his port after dinner at the London.

They are determined, head-strong fellows, these North-countrymen, though they are cautious, and Mr Luke Howard was an admirable specimen of his class. But not very cautious, you may think, not over-discreet in this instance.

Well, you see he was haunted by a pair of big black eyes, and they would not let him rest; he could not be cautious—whenever he attempted to argue with his passion, the eyes looked reproachfully at him, and he saw the owner steal out of the house in Southampton Street, on some errand of mercy.

He little thought what an opportunity was being prepared for an introduction to Miss Martin, when he lit his cigar and strolled from the London towards an adjacent theatre. Miss Martin was walking homewards in an opposite direction, walking hurriedly. A scoundrel, who had been valet to her disreputable father up to

the time of his death, had recognized her, and had spoken to her rudely.

“Here, I say, come—I knows yer,” he said, swaggering towards her.

Bessie quickened her pace.

“It ain’t no good, I means to have a word with yer.”

The woman saw that he was drunk; she went into a shop to avoid him, and made a purchase; but the fellow stood leering at her through the window.

When she came out he tried to take hold of her arm, but she slipped by him, and ran towards her lodgings. At the corner of Southampton Street the scoundrel overtook her, and caught at her shawl. She slipped, and fell, at which the brute laughed loudly.

Almost at the moment that Bessie had arrived at one corner of the street, Mr Luke Howard had reached the opposite one—reached it just in time to see what had taken place. (Oh that some strong man with thick boots might always turn up, as

opportunately, to kick all such scoundrels as the late Mr Barnes's valet!)

Monsieur Valet's laughter speedily changed to a howl. Such a kick! And such a cuff! It would have done your heart good to have heard the one and seen the other. A policeman, who had observed the whole transaction, turned on his heel, and wished he dared have repeated the operation on the same subject.

Monsieur Coward cursed dreadfully and slunk away; whilst Monsieur Valiant, of the thick boots, took Miss Martin under his protection.

"I am very thankful to you, sir," said the woman; "I can go home alone, thank you."

But Mr Howard persisted on seeing her safe into her own rooms; and did so, much to the chagrin of Mrs Jenkins.

Explaining to that peppery personage that the lady had had an accident, he followed the two women up-stairs into Bessie's own room.

It must be confessed that the apartment did not impress the North-countryman favourably. The Northern housewives pride themselves upon their clean and orderly houses, and tidiness was a virtue in woman which Mr Howard had always been taught to prize. Miss Martin's room would have broken a North-countrywoman's heart. It was more like a rag-shop than anything else; and a wretched bit of fire struggling to burn in a dusty fire-grate, with a tea-pot on the hob, made the dismal place look worse. It is only due to Mrs Jenkins to say that she never interfered with Miss Martin's room—she had removed the old china into the next apartment, and the lodger was permitted to allow the dust to accumulate as much as she pleased in her own room.

“This arises out of giving up so much of her time to benefit the poor,” thought the Northman.

Bessie sat down upon an old gown which was partly unpicked, and looked up

inquiringly at Mr Howard and the landlady.

“Are you better, Miss Martin?” Mr Howard asked, “are you better now?”

The wretched woman started to hear her name pronounced by a stranger.

“I hope you are not hurt, not hurt,” said Mrs Jenkins, who had rushed to her relief immediately upon the banker’s explanation that she had been insulted, and that he had brought her home. “Are you hurt, my poor dear?—take a little water. Susan Jane, bring some water.”

“No, thank you,” said the lodger, looking at her with her great wandering eyes.

But Susan Jane came into the room scattering the water about, and earning the quick fierce rebuke of her mother.

“I don’t require any assistance,” said the lodger.

The blue eyes of the North-countryman watched the lithe little form; took note of the black heavy tresses; lingered on the

arched eyebrows, and approved of the well-shaped mouth.

“Who can she be?” he thought, “so pretty, so mournful, so strange, so unprotected.”

Misery had made her precocious in reading faces, and the lodger easily deciphered the honest index to the Northman’s open heart.

“Thank you, Mrs Jenkins, I am quite well now,” she said, with a look that clearly meant “you may go,” and was intended as a hint to the countryman also.

But Mrs Jenkins, remembering the compact entered into between herself and Mrs Stubbs, was determined she would not leave Mrs Stubbs’s first-floor front with Miss Martin.

“I have no right to ask it; but I should take it as a great favour if I might have a few minutes’ conversation with Miss Martin,” said the Tyneside banker, looking first at the lodger and then at the landlady.

Miss Martin made no reply.

“There is my card,” said the North-countryman, in desperation, taking out his pocket-book and laying a card upon the table; “I am a banker of Tyneborough; I do not wish to take advantage of any little service I may have rendered this lady; but if I might—”

In that little bank parlour at home, nothing would have disconcerted Mr Howard. He could have talked to anybody—in his happy, lazy fashion; but here, in the presence of that poor, wretched, half-crazy woman, his mouth became dry, and his tongue almost refused to do its office. He did not know what to say.

Bessie saw his embarrassment, and thought it best to signify to Mrs Jenkins that she granted the gentleman's request; whereupon Mrs Jenkins took up a position outside the door, and bit her lips nearly through, because she could not hear all that was said.

She had laid aside her bonnet and

cloak—this miserable woman with the dark eyes—and taken a seat by the table.

“I know it may seem impertinent that I should ask for this interview,” said the North-countryman, stammering; “but I could not resist this opportunity to tell you of the interest you have excited in me.”

Bessie looked vaguely at him, and nodded.

“I have seen you several times within the last year and a half, and I have thought of you so often when I have been away in the North—far away from London—that I resolved I would speak with you this time before I went back.” (To tell the truth, this Mr Howard had been continually thinking of this very woman during Miss Massey’s visit to Tyneborough.)

The woman made no reply; but the stranger’s confession evidently pained her.

“Perhaps I may not say I love you.”

Bessie started, but in a moment the vague, indifferent expression returned.

“I was afraid I should blurt out something that would not be agreeable, Miss Martin ; but let it pass. What I wish to say, if I can only manage to say it, is that I take a deep interest in you. I have heard of your lonely life ; I have heard of your charities ; and I have seen something in your face which I have seen in no other woman’s ; and I would like to know more of you. My name is Howard ; I am a bachelor, and if I could find a woman who could care for me, I would be a bachelor no longer. There !”

It was a great relief to the North-countryman to have said all this without breaking down.

For a moment Bessie thought she remembered the name of Howard, and the voice did not seem unfamiliar to her. Then she remembered how the trustees under her father’s will had slighted her ; how one of them, in particular, had said they wished to wipe their hands of the whole affair, without any delay ; and how

they had both declined to advise her as to the best use she could make of her unexpected riches ; and then the lights of that November night seemed to burn into her brain.

“ I am very thankful to you, sir,” she said at length ; “ very thankful—it was kind of you to save me from that man in the streets—he had known me once when I was poor. You would like to know my history, but I cannot tell it—and if you knew it, you would soon be glad to forget me.”

The woman spoke in a low voice, as if she were talking to herself, and she hesitated every now and then, whilst her eyes wandered to the open face of her visitor.

“ Don’t misunderstand me,” said the banker ; “ I am not inquisitive. Even had I any claim upon your confidence I would not ask—”

“ No,” said the woman, as if she had not heard him ; “ you would soon wish to forget me—besides, I am poor again now

—I have spent nearly all the money. There are so many that are wretched like me in this great place—this big town, where there are no green fields—money is soon gone here.”

“I hope you do not think money has any influence with me,” said Mr Howard. (If sundry clients who had overdrawn accounts at the Tyneside bank could only have heard him!) “I will only ask you to let me see you again—to let me call upon you. I fear I shall trespass upon your courtesy if I stay longer now.”

Bessie made no answer; but sat looking at the smouldering fire.

“May I see you again? May I call upon you to-morrow?”

“Yes, yes,” she said at length.

The North-countryman took her hand, stammered out his apologies for venturing to obtrude himself upon her; and left the house, nearly falling over Mrs Jenkins, who had been writhing in excruciating agonies of anxious curiosity at the key-hole.

If Joseph Wittle could have seen his sister in that humiliating position—nearly sprawling under the feet of a big North-countryman, who had found her having an audience with the key-hole,—he would have been delighted. For Mr Wittle knew the weaknesses of his sister, and despised them, though he had done a little eaves-dropping in his time, as we know ; but then he had a good purpose in view. And had not that fierce little sister (whom he had not seen for many a long year, and whom he did not care to see again) a good purpose to serve ? Was she not anxious to serve herself, and by serving herself, did she not assist to maintain a hungry family ? As for that idle, drunken fellow, whom the lodgers sometimes heard of as the captain, we don't know whether she was doing what was right or laudable in maintaining him. We should rather think she was not. But that is neither here nor there—she had loved him once, and he had been industrious at one time ; but he

had left that off when he found he could live without working, and get rum-and-water to boot.

So perhaps we may excuse Mrs Jenkins. It might have been only anxiety for the welfare of her children that had induced her to air her eye and ear at her lodger's key-hole. Mr Wittle would have told you that the habit was an old one, and that she had contracted it at the same time that she had picked up her absurd aristocratic notions:—when the Wittles were in the height of their splendour, she was in service as a lady's-maid, and her brother was a groom. Oh, if Mrs Stubbs had only known that!

CHAPTER IV.

“QUOTH THE RAVEN, ‘NEVERMORE.’”

IT was almost marvellous that the keen old Tyneside banker, who had talked to his partner about the sin and wickedness of London, did not rise from his grave and warn his son of the abyss towards which he was hastening. But perhaps the perturbed spirit had been rapped for at some fashionable *séance*, and was engaged in making manifestations under a drawing-room table, when it should have been guarding the infatuated son.

We purposely avoid giving any details concerning Bessie Martin's career. Our shadowy outline will be sufficient for the intelligent reader to judge of her unhappy lot. It is evident that some distinct

gleams of the difference between right and wrong had penetrated that darkened soul, with the discovery of her wretched parent. She was using the money which Barnes had left her for good purposes, and she was exhausting it rapidly.

When Mr Luke Howard left her she rang the bell for Mrs Jenkins, and made this latter fact clear.

"I wish to have a few words with you, Mrs Jenkins."

"Yes, ma'am, twenty if you like," said the little woman, jerking herself into a chair.

"I wish to give notice to leave your lodgings."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs Jenkins, jerking out of her seat again.

"It is not that I am dissatisfied, or wish to change."

"Oh!" said Mrs Jenkins, jerking back into her chair.

"You must not be offended."

"Oh, no," said Mrs Jenkins, working herself into a passion.

“I am only leaving because I shall not be able to afford the rooms any longer.”

“Afford, indeed!” said Mrs Jenkins; “going to be married, I suppose?”

Bessie shook her head sorrowfully.

“To elope, then?—Going to Gretna Green?”

“No.”

“Where then?”

“I don’t know that you have any right to question me.”

“Oh, no, of course not; when a gentleman receives a lady, after making eyes at her from over the way, and then brings her home, and has interviews with her—I see, I see; Mrs Jenkins ain’t blind; but if you’d only have made a confidant of me, and told me all about it; but to leave in this way, and to do it so systematically—well, of course, as you says, I have no right to question you. Oh, no; I’m only a lodging-house keeper, and you are a lady, and pays for my rooms; of course, I knows all that, but there was a time when

a Jenkins might have held a head as high as any in the land."

The excited little woman jerked herself about, and dusted imaginary vases with such frantic gestures, that her lodger attempted once or twice to calm her; but all to no purpose.

"I tell you, Mrs Jenkins, you are quite mistaken."

"Am I, indeed?"

"You are, indeed. I am only leaving because I am poor. I should have left you had I never seen this gentleman at all."

"Should you, really?" asked Mrs Jenkins, turning sharply upon her, and then directing a shot at the half-open door—"Susan Jane, go down-stairs; how dare you?"

"I should, indeed."

"And are you going to be married? I know I ought not to ask, but—"

"I am not."

"Well, what are you going to do? I know I'm very bold; but you see you have

inspired my interest; I have always had an affection for you, Miss, and this notice is so sudden."

"It is; I ought to have told you earlier."

"Yes, yes, certainly."

"But it will make little or no difference to you, I hope, Mrs Jenkins, my not having done so. I am only leaving because I cannot afford to stay."

"Really—upon your word?"

"Upon my word."

"And you are not in love with Mrs Stubbs's first-floor front?" asked the fierce little woman, aiming a smart blow at sundry blacks which were settling on the window-frame.

"No."

"He's in love with you—rich country gentleman, in love with pretty unprotected lady."

"Let us say no more about him; he has not in any way influenced my arrangements."

“Dear, dear; well, I must believe you, ma’am, must believe you.”

“You may.”

“And you cannot afford to pay me? Then I’ll trust you; I will indeed,—regular as the day you have paid before.”

Mrs Jenkins blew the dust off the mantel-shelf, and became calmer.

“I am sure you would not deceive me, Miss Martin; deception is not in that face, not in that voice, as I have always said, and your conduct towards me has always been perfectly lady-like, and if you could continue, and you wanted time to pay in, I would really be happy to—”

“No; it is no use our talking,” said the lodger; “it must be as I say.”

But she did deceive Mrs Jenkins, notwithstanding, and she deceived the Tyne-side banker also; for the next morning, when Mrs Jenkins went to Bessie’s room, her lodger was not there. The money for a month’s rent was lying upon the table,

and on a slip of paper was scrawled, "I shall not return—here is the money for the lodgings."

Mrs Jenkins jerked herself at the money, and plumped it into her pocket; she read the note twice, and then jerked off her gloves, and rushed over to Mrs Stubbs's.

Mr Howard was in.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs Stubbs, "he came in early, and he's got up late, and is now at his breakfast."

And so he was, and quite unconscious of Bessie's flight.

The allied lodging-house keepers did not believe this at first; but when Mr Howard, dressed with the greatest possible care, presented himself at Mrs Jenkins's, and asked for Miss Martin, they believed that he knew nothing of her sudden disappearance.

Gone, and for good—must have fled in the night! The Tyneborough banker was utterly bewildered. He walked nearly all

over London in search of the fugitive. He had frightened her away, of course. What a brute he must be! What right had he to go obtruding himself upon a pretty lonely woman, who had devoted herself to charity? He was half-mad with love and remorse. The waiter at the London was satisfied that he had been robbed, or had dropped his money at cards, or that his bank was going to break.

Poor Luke! Go thy ways! Stay not here, wandering about the great crowded streets. Thou shalt never see Bessie Martin again! Go to thy bank, and count thy moneys. Thy father was glad to be rid of this black-eyed daughter of a scoundrel. Go home, and console thyself. There are others besides thee who have drunk the bitter cup to the dregs.

What! You will still go to London, as usual, if you never see her again? You will still lodge with Mrs Stubbs, and look over the way, and think of her! Well, we repeat, you North-countrymen are wilful,

strong-headed fellows. The Laureate has said that "tender is the North." Be it so, Mr Tyneborough banker. Do as you please. We leave you with your tenderness and your regrets. You will never more see Bessie Martin; but if you meet that rascally valet, you may kick him again if you like—you cannot kick him oftener than he deserves to be kicked!

But whatever you do, Mr Luke, don't tell Laura Grainger of your love and disappointment; don't, if you should meet her again and walk with her, blurt out your adventure, and tell her that you would have given all the world for that woman, who had fled, and left you in your loneliness. Laura may just as well be spared that revelation; besides,—who knows?—Laura may be Mrs Luke Howard yet.

The time may come when Luke will understand and love Laura Grainger—never so passionately as he loved that woman of Southampton Street; but he will surely

want a wife, to sit at one end of that big dining-room table at Pentworth. He will have plenty of choice in the North—choice of goodness and beauty. Perhaps he will hear that Mr So-and-so is paying great attention, unusual attention, to Miss Granger, and then he may think, How dare Mr So-and-so do anything of the sort?

Come what come may, Mr Howard will never more see Bessie Martin!

CHAPTER V.

JOE WITTLE TURNS UP AGAIN.

THE buds *would* burst and make Summerdale green and beautiful, whether Paul Massey lived or died. The flowers *would* bloom; and the creepers *would* shake their leaves round the old latticed window, whether they brought gladness to Mrs Massey's heart or not.

Who could have thought that Anna Lee would have had so much to bear?—so much to suffer? How wretchedly Uncle Mountford would have died if he could have seen the faintest glimpse of Anna's future! What a blessing] that we all die in ignorance of the trials which those we leave behind must surely inherit! That little one at your knee, fair lady; the eyes are bright

and clear now, the brow unwrinkled, the laugh loud and ringing. Pray that the wind be duly tempered to the shorn lamb. She may be wooed and wed, some day when you are gone ; when you are sleeping quietly, like Mark Mountford in that green old churchyard at Helswick.

There is nothing new in this, we know, and our business is not to preach. Well, then, turn we to the more immediate objects of this chapter.

It was a bright spring morning when Joe Wittle put his hands into his waistcoat pockets and sallied forth from the Crown at Summerdale ; Joe Wittle himself ; Joe Wittle, looking a trifle sharper, and a cut more knowing than usual. He had discarded the fur helmet for a tall hat, (remarkable for its thick bristling nap,) which made him look also a trifle quainter, and a good deal more comical than ever. His legs were a little more crooked, if anything, than heretofore ; they had evidently given way under the increasing

responsibility of carrying about a head and body and hat of such importance as Joe's.

Joe Wittle had looked an old man for many a long year; and he did not look ten years older now than when we met him first in the servants' hall at Denby Rise. He was still very horsey, and as he strutted out of the Summerdale inn yard, the sleepy ostler came forth to admire his game, stable appearance.

"Straight along the street, turn to the left, and ask for Hoak 'Ouse, hay, John?" said Joe, turning upon his heel, and confronting the man of the Crown stables.

"That be it to the letter," said the ostler, taking off his cap, and rubbing his bald old head with it.

"Werry well, John,—there's a tizzy for you—drink Hoakouse's health."

Joe slipped a coin into the stableman's hand, returned his own to his pocket, and turned his back on the inn.

The women sweeping their doorsteps,

or tending their little gardens, paused to gaze at Joe, who was one of the most remarkable phenomena in the way of the male sex they had ever encountered.

Joe was in a rollicking, merry humour; so he winked at the Summerdale housewives, bade them good morning, and asked them how their masters found themselves, and how the blessed babbies were.

You see the sun was shining so brightly, and the birds were whistling so merrily, and there was such a sweet smell of new buds in the air, that Joe could not help feeling merry. Moreover, he had not long since been freed from that Johnsonian gaol—a sailing ship, which had been tossed about a good deal, so much so, indeed, that Joe was verily afraid that it would toss itself upside down. When he came ashore he was so impressed with his escape, and so glad to see the chalk cliffs of old England once more, that he had actually kissed a couple of dirty pebbles, which he called

his native land, and had roared out "Rule, Britannia," at the top of his voice, despite the grins of hundreds of people.

One of the Summerdale women, who pointed out where Oak House stood, came in for his especial notice.

"Got a husband, marm?"

"Yes, sir."

"More nor one?"

"No," said the woman, smiling.

"Any chickabiddies?"

"What?"

"Any babbies?"

"Six children, sir."

"Would they like to have a handsome present, marm?"

"I dare say they 'ud," replied the dame, amidst a group of curious neighbours who had gathered round her.

"A good fat pig, now, for instance?"

"I dare say they would."

"Your name?"

"Sarah Hops."

"Say no more, say no more, the pig is

yours," said Joe, writing vigorously in a ponderous pocket-book.

"Would anybody else like a pig, or a watch, or a toothpick?" Joe asked, looking gravely from one to another.

"Yes, me, me," said a curly-pated boy, peeping out of a doorway.

"Your name?"

"Tommy Timms."

"Say no more, Tommy Timms, say no more," said Joe, booking him at once.

"In the mean time, there's a bob on account."

Joe tossed a bright shilling towards the boy, and proceeded again to address the group.

"You see I'm werry rich just now; I can accommodate all of you, I dare say. Would a few saw-pits, or a couple of railway bridges, or an elephant be in your way?"

Thus Joe rattled on, winking and laughing, and joking the country people. It was all foolery, we know, and perhaps

not worth putting down in this history; but we must go into details sometimes. It is desirable that we should show that Joe was happy, and we have sketched his own manifestations thereof.

“No, I ain’t quite a gone coon, old gentleman,” he said to an old man who looked gravely at him, without smiling at all. “And there’s something for ’baccy and beer, just to show you as I knows wot’s wot.”

They were an independent set of people, these Summerdale folks, and the old man declined to receive Joe’s donation, which rather damped the groom’s fun.

“Nonsense, man. I can spare it. I don’t want it. I should like to pay my footing.”

But the old man tossed the coins into the road, and Joe felt the rebuke.

“Very well. I wishes yer good morning.”

The people concluded that Joe Wittle was an eccentric person, who had

given his keeper the slip ; and, with one exception, they laughed heartily at the comical little figure taking long strides up the road.

Old Marshwood didn't laugh ; he was a very poor man, and proud. Moreover, he thought that Joe Wittle, mad or not, was exhibiting most untimely mirth on his way to a house where death was waiting to enter. But how did poor Joe know this ?

What a miserable lot we should be if we knew all about the unhappiness there is around us ! Supposing we knew to-night that the grim old man with the scythe was waiting on the threshold of our dear friend over the way ! How should we be able to go to the theatre, and laugh and roar, and stamp our feet at Mr Low Comedy in the farce ? or go to Mr Old Fogey in the next street, and play that quiet game of whist ? Only the other day our eye fell upon a paragraph, in a newspaper, which related, that during a comic

reading in a Town Hall, a young girl was carried out in a fainting fit. The laughter subsided for a moment, but was a fainting fit to stop the fun? Of course not. The reader was dealing with a scene from that book of books, — "Pickwick." The girl was carried out into the lobby, cold water was dashed in her face; the fit was epileptic, and she died. As she breathed her last, a roar of laughter came bursting out through the half-open doorway. Supposing all those happy people and that jocular reader had known that death was walking by the side of the fainting girl when she was carried out, how very disagreeable it would have been to all those people who had paid their money for a laugh, and wished to have it. They could not have laughed, you know, if they had known that poor girl was dying. They could wipe their eyes the next morning, when they read about it in the paper.

If poor Joe Wittle had only known

what misery had fallen upon the Masseys, if he had only imagined that death was on the threshold of their home, he would have been very miserable and anxious, instead of being exceedingly happy.

"Is Mr Massey at home, my pretty?" Joe asked, when the front door of Oak House was opened to him.

"Yes," said the girl, in a low voice.

"Thank you," said Joe, smiling quite paternally upon the astonished domestic.

"Can I see the gentleman?"

"No, sir, you cannot."

"He is at home, you say," Joe remarked, argumentatively, throwing his head back, and assuming an air of great importance.

"Yes," said the girl.

"Then I can see him," said Joe, firmly.
"I'm telling you, my dear, I'm telling you—"

The only reply which the domestic made was to push the door; but Joe put his leg between it and the door-post, and said, with gravity:

"Now, my good young friend of the laconic school—laconic, I think, that's the word—my dear young female, don't be in a hurry; I ain't a bum-bailiff, or a sheriff's officer, nor nothing of the kind."

"It's no matter," said the girl, angrily. "You can't see master."

"Why not?"

"He is very ill."

"Werry ill, is he? ha, that alters the case; but please to open the door—there, thank you."

Joe stroked his beardless chin thoughtfully, and repeated, "Werry ill."

"Very, indeed," said the girl.

The groom changed his bantering manner immediately, and spoke in a low voice.

"How long has he been ill?" he asked.

"You had better come in," said the girl, "if you really must."

She led the way into the library, where Joe repeated his question.

“A long time, sir—he’s been ill for months and months. Please to give me your name, if you have business of importance.”

“Now, my dear girl, don’t be in a hurry—I’m serious now, you see, and my business is of importance; but I’ve a question or two to ask. How is Mrs Massey?”

“Poorly—please to give me your name.”

“There’s a Miss Massey, I hope she is well?”

“Well, indeed!—how is it likely anybody is to be well when master is very ill? Please to give me your name.”

“Look here, now, Mary, I ain’t no stranger to the family; and I loves the werry ground they treads on; so just go to the missus, and say Joseph Wittle has called.”

“The same books,” thought Joe, looking at the book-case, “as Squire Mountford used to read, the werry identical

chaps. They seem like old friends, and to think as I was hackcherly Mr Mountford's man, when he was a gent in town; I was a werry little chap then, rising thirteen. Ha, how time do fly, to be sure; I'm rising fifty now, and the Squire's gone long since, and here's his pretty niece, the mother of a daughter, I dare say, as big as she were when first she come to Denby, which I remembers the day as if it were only a week ago. And there's the werry books she and the Squire used to read together—the three with red backs, and the six in brown, and the wolumes in green. Ha, there they are, all on 'em—I knows 'em. And, lor bless me! why there's a picture of Harkaway. Well, now, that do show a kind heart in Mister Massey, arter all; I hope he had it done, and not the missus. Well, now, that do show a kind heart. Ha, bless thee, my pet, I've thought on you many a mile away. I shall never forget when I put that air last wisp of hay into your rack, old gal, and when

you rubbed your dear old nose on my cheek. Lor, bless me! Well, I don't know as there's anything could give me more pleasure than to see your picture, old gal, except it were to see your own self. Bless you, old Harkaway—gone, I suppose, now, gone, eh? old gal, gone to a better world, I hopes—gone to the race-'osses' heaven, where you all rests on your laurels, and rubs your noses against your faithful grooms."

Joe Wittle was very much affected at sight of the old mare, and he had thrust a knuckle into each eye when Mrs Massey entered.

"Is that you, Joseph?" Mrs Massey asked, in a whisper.

"Yes, marm—beg your pardon," said Joe, turning round, and checking his emotion. "I was just a thinking, marm—but, lor bless me, missus, how you are altered!"

Joe stared at Mrs Massey in amazement.

She was changed indeed. Her eyes

were sunken, her cheeks pale; and there was a restlessness in her eye that seemed to indicate fear, anxiety, and trouble.

"I am glad to see you," she said, without the least smile upon her face.

"Sorry to hear as master's ill, marm; I suppose it's that as makes you look so much like somebody else," said Joe.

"Mr Massey is very ill—dangerously ill," said Mrs Massey.

"No, no, don't say that, marm," said Joe, snatching up his hat.

"What are you going to do?" Mrs Massey inquired.

"Well, you see, marm, I've no time to spare just now—bless me, how I've been a wasting of it," Joe replied, with great bewilderment. "As master's ill, I will not detain you—lor bless me, how—"

"Sit down, Joe," said Mrs Massey, with a motion of command, "sit down; I can spare you a few minutes, and I'm sure Mr Massey would like to see you."

Joe sat down, and began to pull the fur off his formidable hat, in a very nervous manner.

“Is he so werry ill?”

“He is.”

“’Cause you see, marm, I’ve been away on some business of his.”

“Indeed.”

“Well, no, not exactly—that ’aint exactly what I means; I’ve been in furrin parts, you know, marm, been travelling; and I’ve not forgotten the kindness I received at Denby Rise, marm, and the good old Squire, and—”

“Yes, Joe; you were always a deserving servant, and my uncle had a high regard for you.”

“Thank you, marm—and you see—I think I’d better go, marm—I really must not detain you.”

Joe’s plans were all so disarranged by this serious illness of Mr Massey’s, that he was at a loss how to act. Suddenly, how-

ever, when Mrs Massey pressed him again to be seated, it seemed as if he had formed a fresh plan of operations.

“Is the doctor with master now?” he inquired quickly.

“Yes,” said Mrs Massey, fixing her eye upon him, and observing his confusion.

“Ha! Then I can’t see master just now.”

“Not at present, certainly.”

“Have you heard of a gent named Barns lately, marm?”

“Not very lately,” said Mrs Massey.

“Do you know anything partickler about him, marm? excuse me asking questions.”

Joe looked up cautiously at Mrs Massey, and thrust his hands into his waistcoat pockets.

“What do you mean, Joe? If you have anything to communicate concerning that person, you may tell it to me.”

“You have no partickler regard for

him, marm—leastwise, the master hasn't, I know."

At this juncture Mrs Massey was called away; she returned in a few minutes, but only just in time to prevent Joe Wittle from leaving the house.

"Now, Joseph," she said, speaking so firmly, that Joe was more puzzled than ever. "Now, Joseph, if you have anything of importance to tell your master, your master will see you; but I warn you that he is dangerously ill; that any sudden excitement may be fatal to him. For your own guidance, I may tell you that my husband has no secrets from me—no secrets whatever, mark you, Joseph Wittle, no secrets whatever."

Joe did mark Mrs Massey, and it did not add to his comfort.

"If you have any important message for Mr Massey, I think it will be best that you should give it to me; no matter what it may be, however bad, however good, make known your news to me."

Joe could see that there was no time to lose, and he began to feel like a puppet in Mrs Massey's hands. Her eyes went through and through him, he said afterwards.

"Well, marm, may I ask if you know as Mister Winford Barns is dead?"

"No," said Mrs Massey, cautiously.

"Then I won't trouble to read this ere newspaper just now, you can read it at your leisure, marm; it contains a full and particular account of his death; I only came across the paper by accident: but just as a sort of preliminary, marm, a kind of trial mount, marm, let me ask—are you sorry he's dead?"

"No."

"You know that he was master's greatest enemy, and nearly ruined him?"

"I do; and I am not sorry that he is dead."

"Dear me," exclaimed Joe, scratching his head with one hand, and striking the air a terrible blow with the other, "you

are so werry calm, Missus Massey, that I hardly know how to proceed—do you know anything else, marm? I almost hates myself for asking so many questions.”

“I know everything, *everything*, Joe.”

“Well, then, here goes, marm—here goes. Are you prepared to hear something werry important? Are you firm enough, cool enough, marm?”

“Try me, and quickly.”

“Then, as I said afore, marm, here goes—Mister Harry Thornhill ain’t dead.”

Mrs Massey’s face instantly lit up with a glow of intense surprise and delight. She pressed her hands upon her heart, and looked so suddenly, bewilderingly happy, that Joe Wittle felt a strong inclination to dance all round his hat as it lay on the floor, in the midst of several little piles of fur which he had twitched out of the ruffled beaver.

“Not dead!” exclaimed Mrs Massey, after a few moments.

“No, marm. On the contrairey, he’s alive and jolly, marm. I didn’t leave Denby Rise to travel in furring parts for nothing, marm.”

“God bless you, Joe Wittle,” Mrs Massey said, with great fervency, “God bless and reward you.”

CHAPTER VI.

LIKE A DREAM.

“No, marm, I didn’t go to furring parts for nothink,” Joe went on, “and Mister Thornhill’s come back with me—I made him come, marm—that is, I begged and prayed of him, though I hadn’t to pray long when he found it was really necessary that he should come.”

“You don’t know what a relief these tidings will be to this house; what a weight they will remove,” said Mrs Massey, in excess of joy.

“Well, marm, I had some idea of it—perhaps I know more than I shall tell—I shouldn’t a-left poor old Harkaway, bless her, if I hadn’t known a good deal. I

know'd as how that 'ere Barnes was a-ruining of master."

"There is no doubt he was, Joe," said Mrs Massey, pushing her hair back from her forehead. "Tell me again, Joe, tell me again that Mr 'Thornhill is not drowned, that my husband is—"

She did not finish the sentence, but looked fixedly at Joe.

"Mister Thornhill's alive and well, marm."

"And where is he?"

"An hour or so ago he was at the Crown Hotel, in this 'ere Summerdale, marm."

Anna's heart beat with wild delight. Paul was not a murderer. The brand of Cain was not upon that noble brow. She did not care, just then, to know how Harry had escaped; how he was rescued from the sea, on that miserable night, off Helswick; nor why and how he had concealed himself so long; it was enough for her to be able to go to her husband now, and feel

that he was innocent of the terrible crime to which he had confessed. She did not care to think that he was morally guilty of a great crime still. Harry Thornhill was alive—that was news which would have a heavenly sound in the ear of Paul Massey; that was news which would enable her to put an end to the estrangement which had grown up between herself and daughter; that was news which would bring peace and happiness once more to her dear, dear home. She would go at once and prepare her husband to receive the glad tidings.

“Please to remain here whilst I return, Mr Wittle,” said Mrs Massey, leaving him.

How her heart beat! She hardly touched the stairs as she went up them. She feared she was dreaming. Meeting Kate on the first landing, she kissed her, passionately.

“My dear, dear Kate, do not think your mother does not love you.”

“I do not, my mother,” said Kate,

laying her head for a moment on her mother's shoulder.

"I have some happy news for your father; bless you, my child."

Kate went to her own room, by her mother's desire; whilst Mrs Massey paused for a few minutes on the threshold of the sick room, to gather up her thoughts. Then she glided through the doorway, and crept to the bedside. Paul was awake.

"Dear Paul," said the wife, leaning over him.

Paul smiled a grateful smile.

"Are you better now?"

"A little," Paul slowly replied.

"Do you feel stronger?"

"I think so."

"I have something to tell you, Paul dear."

Anna had not spoken so cheerfully since that scene immediately prior to Paul being confined to his room.

"Something to tell me?" said Paul, opening his eyes a little wider.

“Good news, Paul.”

“Yes,” said the invalid, raising his head.

“*Very* good news, Paul,” said Mrs Massey.

Paul smiled sadly, as he thought how impossible it was that there could be good news for him. Perhaps Dr Fitz had told her that he was getting better. Was that good news to him? No; he would rather die now—rather pass away, trusting himself to God’s mercy, and Anna to His heavenly care. It was a hard lot for Anna, too, he thought, very hard; not only to lose him, not only to be left alone, but to be left without the consoling knowledge that her husband was a man whose memory she could respect and esteem.

A gleam of sunshine came streaming into the room, through the half-drawn blind, enveloping Anna in its radiance. As she stood there, looking smilingly upon Paul, and with the tears standing in her

eyes, she looked like a pitying angel, Paul thought.

“O God, that I should be so unworthy of her,” he exclaimed, as he gazed at her in the sunlight.

“You must not excite yourself, my love; rest a little now. I have told you enough for the present. There, dear; try and prepare yourself to hear the good news.”

Anna smoothed the invalid's hair, and kissed his forehead.

“Promise me to be very calm, my dear.”

“Yes,” said Paul, “I will.”

“Let me carry your thoughts back to Denby Rise, Paul—do not shudder, my love. Sometimes, Paul, God is so good that He brings happiness to people when they can see nothing but black despair. He is sending happiness to us again, Paul.”

The invalid shook his head and sighed.

“He is, dear Paul—now, my darling, you must be calm, do be calm; for I can-

not keep the happiness from you a moment longer. Supposing Harry Thornhill were still alive?"

Anna asked the question in a low soft voice, and smoothed Paul's black hair again.

The sufferer said nothing, but looked at Anna with a startled, appealing gaze.

"Now take my hand, Paul, and try to realize that God can do all things—that He can wipe out all that darkness at Denby Rise, and leave all the sunshine and happiness."

"Tell me—tell me, Anna," Paul exclaimed, grasping her hand tightly.

"Then he *is* alive, dear Paul—Harry Thornhill was not drowned—Joe Wittle has just arrived to tell us so."

Paul shut his eyes for a moment, and then opened them again, and stared about the room.

"Is it a dream?" he asked, by-and-by.

"No, my dear, true, true."

“Great Heavens—merciful Father, I thank Thee!” Paul exclaimed, and sank back exhausted.

Kate Massey re-entered the room at this moment, and Paul raised his head, once more to ask if it was all a dream.

Mrs Massey re-assured him again.

“I am so happy, so very happy,” said Paul, “I shall soon be well again now.”

Mrs Massey returned to Joe Wittle, and Kate sat watching her father.

“There is peace between them once more,” Kate thought, “restored confidence—happiness will come to us again: my prayers have been heard!”

“Well, marm, I’d rather it had occurred a while ago, when the blood-sucker was alive, you see?”

“Who do you mean?”

“Why, that ’ere halligater, Barns—I should like to ha’ frustrated him when he was alive—but he got wot wos his due;

such like mostly do in this world as well as the next."

The reflection that Barns was punished seemed to be highly gratifying to Joe's mind, though he was a little disappointed that the Massey family had suffered so much, in a pecuniary sense, before the return of Harry Thornhill. Joe had thought more about Barns ruining the family, than about the mental suffering and heart-break of which he had relieved Paul Massey; and he had not imagined that Mrs Massey knew so much, as she had lately learnt, of that dreadful night in Helswick Bay.

"How came you to meet with Mr Thornhill, Joe? how came he to remain away so long?"

"It's a long story, marm; but I'll give you an outline of my share in it."

Joe thereupon entered into a short history of those doubts and fears, and mysterious circumstances which had led to his jotting down certain Ideas in Harkaway's

stable; he then described his efforts to secure Mat Dunkum's friendship.

"At last, marm, I works round Mat, and gets at his secret. I needn't tell you how broke down he were, and how Barns was a-selling him, and what I promised him, et cetera, marm," Joe went on, "but at last, when I explained a good deal as how Barns had nearly ruined the master, and all that, marm, and much more, he lets out, and he says, 'Mister Thornhill's alive.'"

Mrs Massey drew a long breath, as Joe paused, and said quickly, "Go on, Joe, go on."

"Alive! says I, a-seizing of that horny hand—alive! I could have embraced that ugly un as told me so. 'Alive,' he says—'I'd been on a little hexpedition,' he goes on to say, 'I'd been out on a little hexpedition, and was just a-dropping home in my boat, in the middle of the night, as the tide served. It was moonlight,' he says, 'and I see something on the top of the

water, and I thought it were a cask,' he says, 'so I backed water a bit to pick it up, when I finds it were a man : ' my heart beat as fast as yourn, marm, when he told me ; please don't excite yourself, marm," continued the groom, thrusting his hands into the innermost recesses of his pockets, and squeezing the lining into lumps.

"Go on, Joe, go on."

" ' So,' says he, ' I picked him up, and a good thing I did—he'd a saved anybody the trouble in a few minutes. I gets him into the boat,' says Mat, ' and I rows him ashore, and I gets him into the caverns more dead nor alive, and what with brandy, a good fire, and other things I brings him round. When I'd done that it was daylight,' says Mat, ' and he leaned on my arm to the door of the cavern, and looked through my telescope at the steamer as he was to have gone in, and at the yacht. Then he made me promise secrecy about this, for ever, and luckily he'd got his pocket-book safe about him, and he gave me some bank

of England notes to cash, and made me do it at once,' says Mat, 'for fear as how the numbers might be known, and there might be trouble; but there wasn't, as it happened, and then after he'd been in bed a day, I went by his request to see how things was going on at the Rise, and I gets him all the news I can. He was werry much agitated about it, and uncertain-like in what he was going to be at. There was a bit of fever on him, too, and he would rave a good deal at times. He was never at rest,' Mat goes on, 'without I was a-telling him something about the Rise, or without he was a-spying at the place through my glass.' He never see such a unsettled gentleman, Mat didn't, never. Mat had to go out every day, sometimes twice a-day, to pick up news about the Rise, and Mister Thornhill made him repeat what he had picked up over and over again, until Mat was a'most a'-tired of it. 'And so things goes on for a week,' says Mat, 'and I disguised him twice, and he goes and sees

and hears for hisself. When he had seen for hisself he comes back, and was as quiet as a lamb,' says Mat. 'I've made up my mind now,' he says to Mat, and from that moment there was no more spying through the glass, no more goin' to Denby for Mat, no more uneasiness. Mister Thornhill took some of Mat's tobacco, and there he sat afore the fire, and smoked, and smoked, and seemed to be managing things for the future. 'At last, after I had made certain matters square,' says Mat, 'I rigs him out in some common togs—he'd been three weeks or more along of me—I rigs him out,' says he, 'in some common togs, and puts him aboard a Yankee brig, and away he goes, and as fine a young chap as ever trod a deck.' "

Mrs Massey saw much more in this simple narrative than Joe did.

"So you see, marm, he got off, and there was a mutual understanding between Mister Thornhill as to secrecy, and Mister Thornhill communicated with

Mat arterwards, and desired him to report when you were married, marm, and all he knew ; and to be sure and let him know if ever you was in trouble in any way. And then, you see, Mat somehow had a hinkling of what had taken place on the yacht, but not all ; however, like me, he had his Ideas, and he put 'em down, and he was not long in getting at Mister Barns. It ain't no good a-looking for the body, he said to that 'ere gentleman, after the search, and he said it partickler like ; however Mister B. did not notice it much just then ; but Mat's a werry sly un, so he worked it on until he got at Mister B.'s game. You see the master thought Mister Thornhill was drowned. There had been a little disagreement, and Mister B. let it out when he was drunk that the master had killed Mister H. : and a lot more which I needn't go into. But you see Mat Dunkum knew something werry valuable, and he made terms with that —— halligater.

Beg pardon, marm; it ain't often as Joe Wittle says a bad word, but—"

"Go on, Joe," said Mrs Massey, intensely interested in the story.

"I must pull up, now, marm, for the present; suffice it to say I left Denby Rise, and travelled in furrin parts, and with some addresses and post marks of old envelopes which I got from Mat D., I finds the gentleman as is with me now, and knowing as you was in trouble, he's come to see if he can do anythink for the niece of his old friend, Squire Mountford."

Mrs Massey uttered a fervent "thank God," and bade Joe inform Mr Thornhill that he should hear from her during the day, and begging him to wait until he had the communication.

When Joe was gone Mrs Massey opened the window, and leaning her arm upon the sash, looked up at the bright Spring sunshine, and wept tears of joy.

For a few moments she thought of the

suffering which Harry Thornhill had undergone for her sake; she thought of his generous sacrifice; but she thought most of the happiness which his return would bring to her husband.

Meanwhile Paul Massey lay with his eyes open, in what he still believed to be a God-sent dream to soothe his dying moments. The sunshine still came through the window. Kate had wished to shut it out; but Paul said it was cheering to his heart; he could look at it now. The motes in the beam were silver globes and golden balls and fairy waifs now; they had been sprites that mocked him with their dancing, with their aerial lightness. The sun itself had burned and scorched him, had seemed to tell tales of his crime to the million motes, to the stone walls, to the living waters. He remembered how it shone forth on that dreadful morning; how it sent down a thousand searching messengers upon the sea that carried about with it the news of his treachery.

Oh, that he might look upon Denby once more now! Oh, that he might see the sun rise in golden splendour above the distant mountains, as it had done on *that* morning! Oh, that he might see it once more peep over the hills, and touch the waters and the rocks, and glimmer on the vane of that old church steeple! Oh, what happiness to see this again, and know that Harry Thornhill was living!

CHAPTER VII.

THE END OF PAUL MASSEY'S TROUBLES.

PAUL MASSEY was dying. Mrs Massey did not know it. Kate Massey did not know it. Dr Fitz alone understood the failing pulse, and he was watching for an opportunity to break the news gently to Mrs Massey.

The doctor found her sitting with the Spring sunshine upon her face, and in presence of her newly-budding hopes, which were now putting forth fresh shoots and blossoms, responsive to the green leaves and flowers.

"Mrs Massey," said the doctor.

"Is it you, doctor?" she replied, turning quickly round.

"It is I," said Dr Fitz, solemnly.

The tone of his voice startled her.

"Is your patient inquiring for me?" she asked.

"No," said Dr Fitz.

"Oh, you wish to see me; you have noticed the change in me, the happiness of my husband, and you wish to speak with me about it."

"I have noticed a change in your husband," said the doctor, somewhat relieved that Mrs Massey had given him such an opportunity to say so.

"Yes," said Mrs Massey, "he is happier, more hopeful, doctor; he has reason to be so."

"Do not let us deceive each other," said the doctor, "there are times when it is the duty of a medical adviser to speak all his fears."

"You alarm me; you terrify me," said Mrs Massey, starting up, and confronting Dr Fitz. "Tell me all; what would you say?"

"Calm yourself, madam; be calm—the

occasion demands it. I fear Mr Massey is dying."

"Oh, surely not, surely not," she exclaimed, fixing upon the doctor a look so appealing, so sad, that the old man would have given all Summerdale to have avoided it.

"My dear Mrs Massey, we must all leave this world, sooner or later. Death is no respecter of persons."

"What *shall* we do? what *can* we do, Dr Fitz?"

"Nothing, my dear lady; we should thank God that He has permitted Mr Massey to remain with us so long, and pray for his soul's rest."

The old Summerdale doctor raised his arm solemnly as he said this, and Mrs Massey fell upon her knees, and wept bitter, bitter tears.

She lived to acknowledge, with prayerful humbleness and gratitude, the justice and mercy of the Creator in His opportune relief of that over-burdened heart which

now gave unmistakeable signs of the coming end. But it appeared so hard, just when the mystery was cleared up, just when the cloud had gone, to lose the dear object of her early love.

In her heart she almost rebuked Harry Thornhill for his living martyrdom. Why had he kept his secret so long? Why did he not return before?

These thoughts were only momentary. "Heaven forgive me," she exclaimed, "it was for my sake."

She despatched a messenger for Harry Thornhill; and although Dr Fitz said all the skill in the world could not save her husband, she sent instructions to the Crown to post off for medical advice to Maryport.

"Paul, dear," she whispered to her husband a few minutes afterwards, "Paul, dear, you would like to see him."

"Is it true?" he asked, with a smile upon his lips.

"Quite true, my dear."

“And not a dream—not a sweet dream sent from Heaven?”

“Sent from Heaven for your comfort is the happy tidings, Paul; and Harry Thornhill himself is coming to see you.”

“To see me!” said the dying man, raising his head; “to see me! what a happy dream it is!”

“It is no dreaming, darling—it is an act of God’s great mercy to us,” said Anna, her tears falling thickly.

“Don’t cry, Anna, don’t cry—I am so happy,” he muttered.

There was the old expression in his eyes again, though they were so soon to be closed—the frank generous expression which had attracted Anna in the old days at Denby Rise. And was she to lose him now? She thought her heart would break. Was he to have no recompense for all that he had suffered, for his years of secret misery?

“And has Harry forgiven me, too? Harry Thornhill?” Paul asked, pressing Anna’s hand to his lips.

“Yes,” said Anna; “and God has forgiven, or He would not have sent him here.”

“I have never prayed for so much happiness as this, Anna; it is only since I have been so ill that I have dared to pray for myself. And you are sure Harry has forgiven me?”

“Oh, yes,” said Anna, never thinking for a moment that anybody would reserve their pardon, however great Paul’s moral guilt might be.

By and by a message was delivered to Mrs Massey, and she left the room to meet Harry Thornhill.

Upon any other occasion she would have received him with a variety of strange emotions; now there was one predominant feeling in her heart—he could bring comfort to her dying Paul.

She started a little when he came forward to take her hand; but the one feeling would not be interfered with.

“Have you forgiven him?” she asked hurriedly.

"I have," said Harry Thornhill.

"Then come quickly, softly—we fear he is dying."

Not another word was uttered. He and Joe Wittle followed Mrs Massey to the sick room, and stood inside the door whilst she went to the bed, and whispered to her husband. Harry was bewildered at the sight of Kate, so much like his old companion, and yet with Anna's long brown hair, and great grey eyes.

Harry had been absent from England about fifteen years, and the principal change in his personal appearance was that he looked so much the older. That quiet resolve, which had always marked his every feature, was perhaps more observable now; but the happy beam of his eye, which had been his greatest attraction when first Frank Grey saw him in Beckford Square, was gone. He never was handsome; but as he stood there, with his head bent low, inside the threshold of the room in which death was

spreading his inevitable mists, he looked a noble, manly fellow who had seen many troubles, and had learnt to bear them. He was dressed in an ample frock coat, buttoned over his chest, and he wore a short beard, that was crisp and curly. For some little time you did not notice that this latter change was the greatest change observable in him, and when you did notice it you might have thought that it became him well.

Mrs Massey beckoned Harry to approach, and as he did so Kate made way for him to near the bed. Paul raised his head slightly, and looked at Harry: it seemed as if all the dying man's soul was in that look of humility, and thankfulness, and joy.

Harry started at the pale face, with death's sign-manual upon it; but he instantly controlled his surprise and sorrow, and took Paul's hand in his.

"Poor Harry," muttered Paul, "poor Harry."

Harry could not speak.

“Have you forgiven me?”

“O, yes, yes, yes,” said Harry, pressing the clammy hand.

“I will not excuse myself,” murmured Paul, “I ought not to have let passion overcome me.” He paused for a moment, breathing quickly, and proceeded, “I was tempted, sorely tempted.”

And now Harry said, “Poor Paul, poor Paul.”

“I was not in my senses; my mind had been perverted: but I would have saved you the next moment—I would have died with you if they had not held me back.”

The dying man closed his eyes for a moment, put out his hand, and asked for water. Harry wetted his lips. He looked up at Harry again, and said,—

“Sin is not punished in the next world alone, Harry. God is just, as He is merciful. Punishment begins with crime. Nobody knows what *I* have suffered, Harry

—nobody but God, who has brought this relief; day and night I have been punished, at all times, and in ten thousand ways.”

Paul paused again, and put his hand to his head.

Anna smoothed his hair; Kate Massey kissed his cheek, and a cause for that terrible estrangement between her parents began to dawn upon the grief-stricken girl.

It had never occurred to Harry in all these years that Paul would suffer thus. A wanderer, as Paul had been, on every sea, in every clime,—accustomed to countries where life was held cheap,—Harry had not dreamed that Paul’s punishment would be so severe; and having struck the first blow, and being fully satisfied that Paul had not intended to thrust him overboard, he had not counted upon Paul suffering the pangs of remorse for more than a few months. There were other reasons also why Harry Thornhill had continued

to maintain the fiction of his death so persistently, which we shall explain in due course.

“Don’t regret, Harry—you have suffered also. I know, *I* know how much. To lose the treasure that I won. What could be greater suffering than that?”

Paul looked at his wife, with a tender loving gaze, and then at his daughter.

“Dear Paul,” said Mrs Massey, taking his other hand.

“My dear, dear father,” said Kate; whilst Joe Wittle ventured to advance to the foot of the bed.

Paul noticed the groom, and motioned for him to approach.

Joe came forward, with a face so full of grief, that a mere spectator might have been surprised to see that features, which would generally have been regarded as comical, could have expressed so much sadness.

Paul released his hand from Harry’s, and gave it to Joe, for a moment, and then

the groom retired, and took his place beside the doctor, who, with folded arms, stood apart and contemplated the scene.

Then, one by one, the domestics stole in, with tearful eyes, as if some unseen messenger had gone forth and told them to come and witness death's victory!

"Raise me up—just a little," said the dying man, faintly.

They put another pillow beneath his head.

He looked round the room somewhat vaguely, and then fixing his eyes upon his wife, he placed her hand in Harry Thornhill's.

"Where is Kate?"

The poor girl was by his side in a moment.

"You will watch over Kate for me," he whispered, turning to Harry Thornhill.

Harry bent his head in response, and rebuked himself that he had waited for Joe Wittle to bring him back to England.

“She has never known sorrow until now.”

The failing pulse had nearly stopped when the dying man muttered, “Gód bless you all.”

A moment afterwards he said, in a louder voice, “It grows dark; but there is peace, peace.”

He laid his hands upon those which he had joined together; his lips moved once more, and then the silence was only broken by the convulsive sobs of those who were in presence of the dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALL FOR LOVE.

WHEN the funeral was over, Harry Thornhill left Summerdale to astonish Maryport with his presence in Beckford Square, having previously communicated by letter with Welford and Co. and Frank Grey.

The ships' masts still looked over the houses into the square, and the sailors, and the men with big whiskers and short necks, and the well-to-do merchants pushed past each other, as they had done when Henry left it; but he was amazed to see so few faces that he recognized, and not one human being who remembered him.

"Did you ever know a fellow named Thornhill?" he asked, stopping one of

the deputation, which had waited upon him years ago, to ask permission for themselves and a number of friends to present him with a parting testimonial.

“Thornhill, Thornhill,” said the burly ship’s-broker, cocking his little round head on one side, like the parrot in his own office, “Thornhill, no.”

“He was very much respected, I think, once in Maryport, though for my part, I think he was a fool,” said Harry, smiling sneeringly, as if he were really not speaking of himself.

“Humph! very likely.”

“I understood he knew you,” said Harry.

“Knew me! Thornhill, Thornhill—may know me, sir; but I never knew him. Fellows brag sometimes of mere acquaintances,” said the Maryport broker, twirling his heavy watch chain.

“He was a member of the firm of Welford and Co.,” said Harry.

“Welford and Co.?—should think not.”

“ I believe he was,” persisted Harry.
“ In fact, I know he was.”

“ Everybody knows Welford and Co.—that’s their place of business, yonder,” said the broker, pointing to the old portico and the dingy doorway which Harry knew so well.

“ Yes—he was a junior partner, I think, this Thornhill, years ago,” said Harry, who, to tell the truth, felt uncomfortable at the complete way in which his name appeared to have been wiped out.

Some people think they would like to walk the earth, in spirit, after death. They would soon be glad to go back to their winding-sheets, under the quiet green turf. They would flit about amongst their most familiar friends, and perhaps never hear their names mentioned. They would see the world going on comfortably in their absence; they would be confounded at the clever way in which somebody else had popped into their place, and fulfilled “ those onerous duties,” which it was

thought must go to the wall with the death of the gentleman "who had fulfilled that office so admirably for five-and-twenty years." Vacant places are filled in the most surprising way. Young men pop into the old seats, and take up the old pens, and begin to write letters, and make calculations, and sign cheques, just as well as the able and accomplished departed, who were to have left blanks behind them that never could be filled up. When Squire Mountford laid his head upon his pillow without power to raise it again, they said the poor of Helswick, the institutions of Helswick, the schools of Helswick would never more have such a friend; but Paul Massey stepped into the vacated place, and the poor people, and the institutions, and the schools were as well cared for as ever they had been. When Harry Thornhill disappeared, you know, wise heads were shaken, and it was thought that a certain department in the house of Welford and Co. would be "in a pretty pickle." Young

Frank Grey, however, sat him down, and the ships came and went as usual, and a certain department was as efficiently managed as ever it had been before. If you had told old Mentz before Mr Howard's death that Luke would have been of as much assistance to the bank as his father, he would have treated you to a growl of contempt, and perhaps thought to himself, "Ah, I hope old Mentz will go first; for it will be hard work to get on without Howard."

But we must not leave Harry Thornhill and that pompous broker standing at the entrance to Beckford Square.

"He was a junior partner," Harry had repeated.

"Ah, yes, now I think of it, I do remember something of him," said the broker, cocking his head on the other side for a change, "I do remember—he was blown up in a steamer, or got drunk, and tumbled off a coach, or something—oh, yes, now I remember."

“Indeed,” said Harry coolly, “thank you.”

“I say—here—why do you want to know about this fellow?—anything in the wind?”

“Nothing—good morning,” said Harry, turning on his heel; for he did not relish the man’s manner towards his departed self. He remembered how this same gentleman had spoken, for himself and friends, on that testimonial question, and how fulsome he had been in his flattery. The broker was bald-headed now, and had to wear false teeth; but false hearts are almost as common as false teeth.

Harry thought so—we decline to put the cynicism forward as our own,—though we readily forgive Harry for thinking it, because he met several other men in the square, and held conversations with them—none of which were any more satisfactory than the one we have recorded.

At length he buttoned his coat as if he were about to encounter a giant, and dis-

appeared beneath the portico of the well-known house of Welford and Co.

Nobody in the lower offices knew him. Frank Grey, who had scarcely overcome the surprise and amazement with which he had read Mr Thornhill's letter, received his former patron in Harry's own room, with sincere manifestations of wondering joy.

"I can hardly believe my own eyes," said Frank.

"Ditto," said Harry, for you've become an astonishingly fine fellow since I saw you last, Frank—why, you've grown three inches at least, and you altogether astonish me—whiskers, and manhood, and all have come long ago, I see."

Frank laughed, and said, "Let me feel your hand again—are you sure you are not a ghost."

"Quite," said Harry; "where's Mr Welford?"

"He never comes near the office now, sir; he travels about for the benefit of his health."

“Travels,” said Harry, “why, he must be eighty-five.”

“He is all that,” said Frank; “and if it were not for the gout he would be quite nimble.”

“And how’s Mickleton?” (the second partner).

“Dead, sir—two years since.”

“Poor fellow,” said Harry, pausing for a few minutes, in respect to the good man’s memory.

“And Bailey?” (the third partner).

“He’s in Paris at present, and quite well, I believe.”

A hundred other questions Harry asked about a hundred different men and things, and Frank sat and wondered and told him everything, including some of his own trials and troubles.

“But I am very glad indeed that I have not taken your place altogether,” said Frank; “I should hardly have known how to meet you, had you returned and found *me* the junior partner.”

“Why not? You are over-scrupulous, Frank. I was dead to all intents and purposes, so far as you were concerned. I was drowned sixteen years ago, sir—I heard my own passing-bell tolled, and saw the fishermen searching for my body. But of that at a future time. I am going back to Summerdale to-morrow; kindly report me fully to the house.”

“To Summerdale?” said Frank, quickly; “I am so grieved at the death of Mr Massey.”

“Did you know him then?”

“Yes,” said Frank, shaking his head sorrowfully.

“Intimately?”

“Well, perhaps, not very intimately; but I am so very sorry for Mrs Massey, and—for her, her daughter.”

Harry noticed how the blood rushed into Frank’s face when he spoke of Mrs Massey’s daughter.

“You have met them, then, frequently?”

“My father’s connection with Summerdale—he made it his home for a time—brought me in contact with them,” said Frank, hesitatingly, “and I spent a day in their society at Tyneborough; I happened to meet them there quite by accident.”

“A pretty girl, Kate,” said Harry, thoughtfully.

“Oh yes, very, remarkably pretty,” said Frank with enthusiasm.

“And a good girl too; evidently loves her mother.”

“Good! As good and generous as she is beautiful,” said Frank with increased warmth.

“Ha—shall I deliver any message for you,” Mr Thornhill asked, looking somewhat sorrowfully at Frank.

“If you would I should be glad.”

“If I would! I will, man.”

“I have ventured to write a few words of condolence to Mrs Massey,” said Frank; “a few words about my sympathy with them, and if you would tell Miss

Kate how I have grieved about them all."

"I will do so," said Harry, "but now put your hat on, and come with me."

They went out, and round the square, and down to the river. They rambled amongst the shipping; they watched the steamers going out of dock on their way down the river to Helswick and other places. Frank pointed out the very steamer that Harry had been accustomed to journey in—the steamer that carried away news of his death. The same captain was in command—the man who would have done anything in the world to serve Mr Thornhill, yet he touched his cap to Frank, and passed Harry by without the slightest recognition.

It made Harry very miserable to find himself so utterly gone, so thoroughly dead; had it not been for the relief he had been enabled to bring to the Masseys, he felt that it would perhaps be better, after all, that he should still be the drowned

Harry Thornhill ; the old ties and associations were gone. He began to think there was nothing left to come to life again for, but by and by Frank Grey confessed to Harry how much he loved that girl, that pretty Kate Massey. Here was another victim, he thought ; perhaps he might save him.

This thought increased Harry's interest in Frank's narrative of that Summerdale party and the subsequent visit to Tyneborough. And they walked and talked by the river until they were out in the meadows which the *Harry* had glided by on that morning after the disturbance at "Keem's Harmonic Bowers." The river was alive with all kinds of craft, from the tiny skiff to the three-masted ship. There were butter-cups and daisies in the meadows, and shadows of the clouds were sailing over the grass like the ships on the river.

When they had gone so far that Maryport looked like a speck of smoke in the

distance, they hailed a tug-boat passing up the river, went on board, and returned to Beckford Square, and thence to dinner, over which Frank talked of Summerdale and Tyneborough again.

Harry went back to Summerdale on the morrow, full of schemes for the future, and hoping that Kate Massey might come to love the young fellow whom he could see was deeply smitten with her charms.

“ You desire that I should tell you my story,” said Harry to Mrs Massey a fortnight after the funeral, “ before I leave Summerdale for good.”

Mrs Massey was sitting near the closed window, where Dr Fitz had brought her the ill-tidings of that Spring morning, when Paul Massey died. Her face wore a thoughtful expression, but there was much less of sadness in it than had appeared during those weary days immediately succeeding Paul’s confession. Her

hair was gathered up into a widow's cap, and her still graceful and round figure was clothed in deep mourning.

"Yes, yes, tell me all," she said.

"Can you bear me to speak of the past so soon?" Harry asked, uneasily.

"I can bear anything now," said Anna.

"He told you what took place on board the yacht? I accept his version fully."

Anna nodded her head.

"I was not hurt; I was always an excellent swimmer. I struck out in what I thought was the direction of the shore. Happily the tide was flowing, and I was carried in the right direction. The moon shone out for a moment and showed me the Denby Caverns within a very short distance. The yacht must have drifted slightly with the tide. I heard some commotion on board and fancied they were lowering a boat; but my strength was failing me."

Anna bent down her eyes and shuddered.

“The moonlight came again for a moment, and then I seem to have lost my senses, until I was picked up, not by the yacht’s crew, but by Mat Dunkum, who took me to the Caverns. By the aid of restoratives I recovered, and just in time to be enabled to stagger to an aperture, where I beheld, through Mat’s telescope, the steamer receiving the news of my death, and saw the yacht put into Helswick bay. Under my instructions, Mat went out and brought me the news which had set the Helswick passing-bell tolling. A circumstantial account of my accidental death was given, with full details of my having had too much wine, and striking my head against the vessel as I fell, together with all particulars of the lowering of the yacht’s boat, and finally, of the search for the body.”

“Oh, why did you not contradict it all?” Mrs Massey asked.

“And ruin your happiness,—clear my own reputation of having been drowned through drinking too much wine, and blast the character of him you loved, Anna!”

“Forgive me, Harry, forgive me!”

“I had even contemplated that; it was not until some days after the event that I fully resolved to keep up the story of my death. Mat brought me reports of what took place at Denby Rise, so far as he could obtain them.”

“Do you remember my returning the ring to you, and asking you to wear it, for my sake, as your brother?”

Anna moved, to signify her remembrance.

“We were watched, and the circumstance was distorted into an avowal of your love for me—that was one of the causes of poor Paul’s jealousy; and Winford Barns was, no doubt, the spy. But I will not dwell upon that. For your sake, Mrs Massey, *I* turned spy also. Dis-

guised in some of Mat Dunkum's clothes, I watched Denby Rise. I heard your avowal of continued love for Paul Massey. Days passed away; Paul succeeded in soothing your sorrow, and I saw you a happy trusting pair."

Anna bowed her head, but there were no tears in her eyes.

"Perhaps you may ask me how I could think Paul Massey was happy when he thought he had killed me. I did not care then—why should I?—about Paul's happiness or misery. I saw you happy, knew you happy, and that was sufficient. No harm could come to you through my disappearance; on the contrary, the first keen sorrow attending the news of my death being over, it was better that the fiction should be maintained; for all of us it was best I should not disclose myself; at least I thought so—if for nothing more than the being rid of one cause for jealousy. Then I learnt that the marriage had been settled upon, and that it was only post-

poned a little on account of my death; so, making arrangements to hear of you, I left England, as I thought, for ever. In due course I heard you were married, and that Squire Mountford—dear Mark Mountford—had died; I heard of your husband's devotion to you; of the birth of your child; of your great happiness; Mr Massey was beloved by all around, for his charity and benevolence, and Mrs Massey was his happy idol. Paul is atoning, I thought, and Anna is happy. I will not give you a history of my own struggles and difficulties meanwhile. I had a new name to make in a new country. I had to work hard, and I did work. It was my only resource. I soothed my thoughts with labour; it saved me from madness. At last I could begin to think of myself as another being; I could begin to think of Harry Thornhill as of some dear friend whom I had known, and I felt that Harry Thornhill was really dead. Years rolled on. I stopped my

communications with Denby and with England altogether. I became a tolerably successful merchant, and should have died quietly, in due time, in Washington but for your old groom, Joe Wittle."

Mrs Massey had endeavoured to school herself into a severe calmness whilst Harry told the story of his great self-sacrifice, but her true womanly nature, her sense of truth and justice, and all that was good in her, would not be restrained from demonstration.

"Noble as ever you were," she said, "my brother;" and the tears fell upon her hand.

"Joe told me of your pecuniary troubles—of the treachery of Winford Barns—and it was not necessary that he should go down upon his knees to implore me, as he did, to come to your aid. We read of the death of Winford Barns on our way; and I would fain have given up the journey then, only that Joe described your position as one almost of poverty."

"I cannot, dare not, think how my poor husband could have died had you not come," said Anna, slowly. "As for poverty, there was, perhaps, no danger of that, though our property is very seriously reduced."

Harry had long since wiped Anna's likeness from his heart; and if you had told him that anything could have revived it, he would have shaken his head, and put aside the idea as foolish. But with Anna before him, and with memories of the bright happy days at Denby Rise prior to the advent of Paul Massey, a gleam of happiness seemed to penetrate his soul, like the shimmering play of a sunbeam on a long-disused dial.

"I am glad to hear that Joe Wittle exaggerated, Mrs Massey—it was pardonable. And now, unless you have any question to ask, I have done with a very painful subject, and will turn to another—with which Hope has more to do."

"I am deeply indebted to you, Harry,

deeply," said Mrs Massey, with her grateful eyes upon his face.

"Your daughter is a good, affectionate creature; be careful how she bestows her love, Mrs Massey, let there be no concealment between you."

"I had no mother to guide and counsel me," said Mrs Massey.

"There is a young man named Grey—Frank Grey, who, during my absence, has taken my place. He is an upright, honourable gentleman, with a fine cultivated taste for all that is beautiful; as true a fellow as there is in broad England. He might have been taken into the firm as junior partner long since; but he declined this honour and additional emolument from some private motives, which are most honourable to him, but which I hope will no longer prevent him from accepting the position. He loves your daughter. Question her upon this subject, and at once; let there be no more heart-break."

Mrs Massey felt the sting which

Harry had unintentionally put into this latter sentence.

“She is so young,” said Mrs Massey.

“But old in taste and judgment, and thought and fancy; she is one of those girls who are women long before the majority of girls. Let me ask you to question her,” said Harry.

Mrs Massey had told Kate what she knew of the sad story of her father, and in the evening, after making Mr Thornhill promise to spend two more days at Summerdale, Mrs Massey told Kate all. She listened attentively, and, with the feeling and judgment of a woman, said how thankful they should be to God for His great goodness in sending Mr Thornhill to poor papa, that he might die happily.

“So happily, mamma; it seemed to me as if there were angels in the room. Dear father, I could have wished we were all going with him.”

“Bless you, my child,” said Anna.
“You are young, and you must endea-

your to accept our loss with resignation, and look forward to the future. It is sinful to mourn over-much the loss of those we love, of those who are gone to heaven before us, dear Kate; and for your father, although it may seem hard that he should have been taken away when his worldly troubles were at an end, what a blessing, what a great blessing that he could die peacefully and happily!"

Mother and child talked thus, in the evening twilight, consoling, comforting, and cheering each other, until Mrs Massey's thoughts came fully back to the living, and Harry Thornhill's words vividly recurred to her.

"When Mr Thornhill came this morning, love, he brought a very kind message from Frank Grey, who, he says, feels deeply for us in our affliction."

Kate said nothing, but put her arm more closely round her mother's neck.

"I think he would like to come and see us," said the mother, cautiously. But

she could not probe her daughter's heart now. The poor girl had quite enough to bear, just then, without this.

Kate made no reply, and the next day when Mr Thornhill called to advise Mrs Massey's solicitor with regard to the title to Denby Rise, and to give information on some other points concerning the estate, which had been the late Mr Mountford's property, Mrs Massey held a short conference with him about her daughter, and it was agreed that Harry should privately inform Frank's father and mother that a short visit of condolence to Summerdale would be acceptable to Mrs Massey, and that Frank might accompany them.

Meanwhile, Joe Wittle had taken up a position at the Crown Inn, which had astonished the domestics of that ancient hostelry, and which was excessively amusing to the customers generally.

"I likes to make myself useful," said Joe, soon after his arrival there. "I

can't live in idleness, and so you'll excuse me if I interferes occasionally, won't you, marm ?”

“ We shall see,” said the landlady, a buxom woman, who had contrived to remain single, until there was little likelihood of her changing her euphonious name of Rosebud, which was painted in white letters beneath the yellow crown that swung pompously and grandly, from creaking chains, outside the well-known house.

“ Well, I'll promise you, marm, I won't be officious; but I knows somethink of everythink, and of 'osses in pertickler, and if I can give anybody a wrinkle I shall.”

So Joe made himself busy at the Crown, waiting upon the guests occasionally, telling them funny stories, and putting the ostler up to all sorts of queer ideas about the management of horses. Before a fortnight had passed, Mrs Rosebud said he was certainly the cleverest and merriest

little fellow that had ever been in her house; and the customers, who smoked their pipes at night over the bar fire, said he certainly was the funniest man alive.

“You see I’ve travelled, marm,” Joe would say to the landlady; “I’ve travelled, and I knows a thing or two in consequence.”

“Yes, there be no doubt about that,” Mrs Rosebud would say, “and Summerdale can do with an intelligent man as do know summat, for it’s not over-clever we are here.”

She was forty if she was a day, this buxom Mrs Rosebud, and there were great dimples in her cheeks almost big enough to have buried Joe Wittle. She had a loud, jovial laugh, which had never been heard so frequently as it had since Joe’s arrival. He had such queer ways, had the little groom, and he perched himself upon Mrs Rosebud’s arm-chair, whilst she was washing glasses, and said such comical things that Mrs Rosebud declared she

should break everything in the house and crack her sides into the bargain with laughing at him.

“Don’t crack your sides, marm,” Joe would say, “you’ll find it werry disagreeable and unpleasant, to say nothink of the inconvenience.”

“When do you intend leaving here, Mr Wittle?” Harry Thornhill asked.

“Well, it’s hard to say,” said Joe, “I have had roaming enough of late; I think I shan’t slip my cable from this port, as the sailors would say, for the present.”

“What do you say, Mrs Rosebud?” Harry asked.

“He may stay as long as he likes,” said the fat, dimpled landlady, laughing.

“I pays my bill reglar—of course I can stay—how much a week as a permanent lodger, Mrs Rosebud?” Joe asked, winking at the landlady.

“He do make me laugh so, sir, that I

really think I shall kill myself," said the woman, sitting down and getting so red in the face that Joe jumped out of his chair and patted her back, which only added to her hilarious agony, and set her fighting at him, with her round, soft arms.

"Well, marm, if you declines the assistance of your friends, I can't help it," said Joe, putting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his long waistcoat, and warming his back at the fire.

Harry Thornhill could not help laughing at the comical scene; Joe winked at him, and nodded at Mrs Rosebud, and Harry left him hugging an imaginary form to his heart, whilst Mrs Rosebud was endeavouring to stamp out her fit of laughter on the shining brick floor.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CROWNING POINT OF JOE WITTLE'S CAREER.

THIS chapter may be a very marked illustration of the one step between the sublime and the ridiculous. But Joe Wittle would insist upon treating the guests at the Crown to whiskey-punch, and the faithful chronicler cannot help it if Joe made a fool of himself in consequence.

"I ain't a-joking, marm, 'pon my life," said Joe Wittle, when the last bar-parlour guest had gone, "I ain't a-joking."

"La, Mr Wittle, why, you makes me feel quite serious," said Mrs Rosebud, putting her hands upon her knees, and looking Joe Wittle in the face.

"It's a treat to see you in a new character, marm, said Joe, leastwise for a

minute or two, 'cause it enables a looker-on to 'preciate your smiles, marm; smiles which become those blessed cheeks a yourn, marm, as bootifully as them blue ribbons becomes your flowing 'air."

Joe put his hand upon his waistcoat buttons, looked at Mrs Rosebud over the back of a chair, and sighed.

"La, you makes me quite uncomfortable, Mr Wittle, sir, to hear you a-sighing so," said the blushing spinster.

"Sighing, marm—I've been a-sighing in'ardly ever since I've been within fire of them 'ere eyes of yourn; maybe I've chatted, and cut capers, and all that, but it's only been to hide my nobler feelings, and smother them sentiments of this faithful boosom, which is yours, Mrs Rosebud, yours," and Joe struck the upper portion of his waistcoat, with his hands, and rocked himself to and fro in his chair, so energetically, that Mrs Rosebud was fain to rush to the chair and lay violent hands upon it, lest it should fall over, to the

damage and detriment of the little groom.

"Never mind, Mrs Rosebud, I'm telling yer, marm; never mind, let it fall—no matter what becomes of Joseph Wittle, if the beauty and hope of the Crown refuses to smile upon him."

"Well, now you makes me miserable, you do," said Mrs Rosebud.

"When I was covering my feelings with the empty joke and the vacant laugh, Mrs Rosebud, then your merry voice resounded in my ear; and now that I ask you to take pity on the heart your eyes has pierced, you becomes melancholy."

"If I thought you were quite sober, Mr Wittle, I might treat what you've said differently," said Mrs Rosebud, still standing by his chair.

"Mrs Rosebud, this from you! O, Joseph Wittle, it is time you disappeared from this vicked world. Your wanderings being ended, your noble duties done, you thought, dear Joseph Wittle, to unite two hearts in one; but, Rosebuds is de-

ceptive, and woman's heart is false, and my own is nearly broken for the love of Alice Grey."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs Rosebud, darting from the chair as if she had been stung by a viper.

"Oh, indeed—and who may Alice Grey be, Mister Wittle?"

"What 'ave I done? what 'ave I said?" exclaimed Joe, jumping from his chair, and staggering towards the buxom landlady, "it were an attempt at poetry, and it's failed. Carry me out, Mrs Rosebud, carry me out, and bury me decently without a gun or funeral coach, when the bloom is on the rye."

"You're tipsy, Mr Wittle—you're tipsy—I thought you were at first—go to bed, sir," said Mrs Rosebud, taking Joe by the collar, and holding him up at arm's length.

"She never told her love," said Joe, "when the marriage bells was ringing,—though 'twas on a windy night,—and his wild harp slung behind him."

“You’re tipsy.”

“When I gets into poetry and the realms of song, Mrs Rosebud,” said Joe, becoming very thick and hiccuppish in his speech, “when I gets a-thinking of the ballads of my country, my heart is full of love. You didn’t know Tom Moody, marm, the whipper-in so well?”

“I know you, Mr Wittle, I hope, and if ever I had any serious thoughts of you, sir, this is not the way to improve them.”

“Nor more it ain’t; itsh the firsht time, marm, ash ever Joe Whishles dish-grashed hishelf, and itsh the lasht; but he’ll love you till hesh dead, and then he’ll begin again—oh dear, oh dear.”

Joe was growing worse every minute; when the guests left he was what they call lively, but from that point he gradually sunk, in the most extraordinary way, into the melancholy maudlin state. In the lively condition he commenced what was very much like a formal proposition of marriage to Mrs Rosebud; who was grievously

disappointed when she discovered that Joe was not only in liquor, but that the nearer he came to the point, the more intoxicated he became.

We must do Joe the justice to say that he was usually a most sober fellow. Mrs Rosebud was a cautious woman, and she felt that a drunken landlord of the Crown would never pay, and would be very unpleasant besides, so she went to bed, determined to know more of Mr Wittle before she entertained any offer he might make, when he was sober.

Meanwhile Joe was conducted to his room by the ostler, to whom he promised to leave his watch, whenever the sands of life were sped, and Joseph Wittle had quitted this wicked, wicked world, and was numbered with the dead.

Mr Wittle was very unwell the next morning; he could not leave his bed, and he sent a humble request to Mrs Rosebud for mutton broth, which was con-

sidered an excellent sign by that excellent woman.

"When a man's used to drink, which I don't think Mr Wittle is, it don't affect him like that."

But Joe was so heartily ashamed of himself, that when the coach came in that night, he insisted upon booking himself to the last stage, in order that he might take the rail to Maryport the next day.

"I'm ashamed of myself, Mrs Rosebud," he said, "and I will go."

"And are you ashamed of what you said?"

"I don't know what I did say, marm."

"Very well, then it is best we parted."

"I think so, marm."

Mrs Rosebud rubbed the tankard which she had just washed, so brightly, that Joe could see her dimpled cheeks in it.

"I don't want to go, marm, if you 'aint ashamed of me," said Joe.

"Oh, it's nothing to me, Mr Wittle, do as you please."

Joe did as he pleased, and remained where he was; and it is no breach of confidence on our part to say that Mrs Rosebud was glad that the coach went away the next morning without him; for Joe had made himself so valuable to the Crown, that it was difficult to say whether the famous hostelry, having once enjoyed the benefit of his advice and professional aid, could exist without his managerial presence.

When we intimated at the outset of this chapter that Joe had made a fool of himself, let it be clearly understood that we only meant to apply our uncomplimentary remark to the folly of an immoderate imbibing of whiskey-punch. We have too high an opinion of Mrs Rosebud to insinuate, for one moment, that Joe was a fool for proposing to marry her. To offer his hand and heart to that buxom spinster might be a courageous act, might be valiant in the extreme, but it was not foolish.

Mrs Rosebud was a happy, generous woman, and had inherited an excellent business from parents who, if they had married late in life, had also died late, finishing their career at ages averaging eighty-five. She could knit, and spin, and brew, and make out a bill with any landlady in the country, and she was the fattest, the rosiest, and the most dimpled.

It was only a little fellow who would dare to propose to such a woman. It is only the short men who seem to appreciate the grace and beauty of tall women.

Joe Wittle was a little man, as every reader of this history knows, and not devoid of courage. He had never given his mind to love and the like, as he told Mrs Rosebud, until he had nothing else to do ; not but what he might have done if he had chanced to meet her years before. But when he did lay himself out for matrimony, his choice was certainly for a fine, handsome woman, of greater proportions than himself.

"It's all nonsense, Mr Wittle—I don't believe a word of it," she said, a fortnight after the whiskey episode, just narrated.

"No, marm, it ain't. It's many a year since I was overcome with liquor, for it ain't in my nature to take more than is good for me."

"That I believe," said Mrs Rosebud.

"All men have their peculiarities when they are tipsy, Mrs Rosebud; what mine may be I know not, but I should be werry much inclined to think they would hinge on letting out my private thoughts and opinions."

"You think so?" said Mrs Rosebud, plying her needles industriously.

"I do, indeed, marm: I don't ask you to tell me all I said—I have a glimmering of some of it."

"All you said when?"

"On that night, you know, when I did what I or't not to have done."

"You said all manner of things," said the landlady, taking up several fallen stitches.

“To come to business, marm, did I say that I loved you?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Rosebud, letting fall the stitches she had taken up.

“Did I say that I loved you better than any woman in the world?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Rosebud, taking up the aforesaid stitches.

“And did I say as I had never loved before?”

“La, Mr Wittle, don’t ask so many questions.”

Joe brought his chair close to the buxom spinster, and laid his hand upon her fair round arm.

“Then to come to the point, Mrs Rosebud, whether I said it then or not, I says it now, if you’ll accept Joseph Wittle for better or for worse, the man’s before you.”

If Mrs Rosebud had not been really very partial to Joe Wittle, she might have looked about for the man before her, and not seen him, so diminutive was our little

friend in comparison with Mrs Rosebud. But she had no eye for the humorous features of the scene, and she signified her consent to become Mrs Wittle, by holding down her head, and whispering, " Joseph, I'm yours."

CHAPTER X.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET AGAIN.

MRS JENKINS had actually been driven to advertise her lodgings—the rooms which had been occupied by we know whom. The paper had hung in the window until it was quite yellow, and notwithstanding that Parliament was sitting, and notwithstanding many other things, the apartments still remained vacant.

It happened that about the time when Mrs Jenkins's rooms were advertised, Mr Joseph Wittle and his buxom wife (whose marriage had been solemnized soon after the soft utterance, by Mrs R., of that important monosyllable “yes”) had resolved upon visiting London.

“It's the slack time of the year with

us, Jemimah, and why shouldn't we have a jaunt? Why shouldn't we?"

"It's as you please, Joseph, you be the master now," Mrs Wittle (*née* Rosebud), replied, rubbing away at a pewter cup, which was already reflecting her round, dimpled face.

"Well, then, being the master, and the proprietor of them air charms as says so, I decrees, Mrs Wittle—I proclaims that this loving pair do journey to London."

"To London! Why, Lord love 'e, you don't mean that, Joseph, do 'ee?" exclaimed Mrs Wittle, putting down the pewter cup, and contemplating Joe with an air of astonishment and wonder.

"Mean it, of course I does!"

There was no mistake about it,—Joe did mean it, and as he generally did what he meant to do, he speedily arranged that this famous jaunt should speedily come off.

The Summerdale people were alarmed at first, when they heard that the landlord

and landlady of the Crown were going to London for a week. But when Joe explained that he knew the place, and had lived there, that he was up to all the sharpening of the great town, they were a little more reconciled to the thing.

But Mrs Wittle was persuaded to put some of her money in her glove, and some in her stockings, and to have some stitched into the body of her gown,—notwithstanding Joe's experience. For Summerdale had heard extraordinary accounts of London pick-pockets. They had also heard of the gentleman who lined his pockets with fish-hooks, and they insisted upon Mrs Wittle carrying the remainder of her money in a purse placed at the bottom of a private pocket similarly guarded.

There was quite a crowd to see the happy pair off; and the old coach fairly creaked and groaned beneath the weight of Mrs Wittle and her luggage. But the coach did not show the effects of its extra load of responsibility more than did the

neighbour and friend of Mrs Wittle, who had undertaken to take care of the house and mind the bar in the landlady's absence. Joe nodded gravely to the helps who assisted Mrs Wittle to her inside place, and the wind made quite little waves on his new long-napped hat.

"Now, Villiam, Villiam, vill yer hold that 'oss's head whilst the missus is seated?"

"Yes, sir," said Villiam.

"Then why the deuce don't you?—it makes a fellow so savage to have the coach a wobbling about like this."

Villiam held the animal tightly on both sides of its head, with both his hands, to the intense admiration of three little boys, who would have given all they possessed to have been permitted to hold the second obstreperous beast.

Several passengers here took their seats; the guard blew his horn, as the first signal for starting; and the lookers-on contemplated Joseph Wittle with delight and won-

der. They had never seen that jocular little man bear himself with such importance ; they had never seen him so splendidly attired.

Joe, upon this occasion, wore a shining black coat, with large pockets in the sides ; a long plush waistcoat, with bright buttons upon it, and having the usual capacious pockets which Joe affected ; a pair of black trowsers, fitting close to the little legs ; a blue neckerchief, with white spots upon it, pinned with a white ivory race-horse ; and a new ruffled-beaver hat.

When the second blast of the bugle horn was blown, Joseph Wittle pulled from his waistcoat pocket a pair of yellow gloves, which he drew upon his hands, with intense gravity. Then he closed the coach-door upon the inside passengers, kissed his hand to his wife, and lighted a very thick cigar, prior to taking his seat on the box. For Jem Jeffs, the coachman, who had driven that identical vehicle for five-and-thirty years, had, upon this occasion only, relin-

quished the seat to Mr Wittle out of deference to that gentleman's abilities, and in recognition of Mr Wittle's position as the proprietor.

"Now, Villiam," said Joseph, flourishing the whip above his head, "let 'em go, Villiam."

The horses threw up their heads, threw them down again, and went off at a pace which was hardly the thing at starting, Jem thought; but Jem said nothing.

The little crowd threw up its caps and cheered with wonderful glee; and Joe worked away at the reins, like jockeys do just when they make the last spurt for the winning-post.

The horses not understanding this sort of treatment, capered about most fantastically, and at length stood still altogether, to the amusement of Jem Jeffs, who laughed so frantically, that the guard thought it charitable to scramble over the top, and seize the old coachman by the collar, to prevent his falling into the road.

Joe flourished the whip and vociferated, but all to no purpose; Mrs Wittle nearly dislocated her neck in looking out of the coach window; and at last Joe handed the reins to the guard, for Jem Jeffs was too violently amused to do anything but shout "ha, ha, ha," "oh dear, oh dear," "I shall burst," "I shall die," and roll from one side to the other.

As soon as Joe relinquished the reins, the horses started off again; and Mr Wittle amused himself and the passengers during the remainder of the journey by his eccentric conduct as guard.

They had not travelled far by rail (they occupied a first-class carriage—why should they not?—they had plenty of money), when an old gentleman offered Mr Wittle the *Times* to read, and in one column of the advertising sheet Joe found that a great number of ladies were living in houses which were larger than they required, and that they had generously determined to devote certain portions thereof to

individuals who were in search of lodgings which had all the attractions and comforts of home, on reasonable terms.

Amongst other advertisements was one which set forth that Mrs Jenkins, of a certain number, Southampton Street, Strand, had a large sitting-room and bed-room to let, suitable either for a single or married couple, and that the rent was moderate.

Having regard to the central situation of Southampton Street, and Mrs Wittle having only made one condition with respect to this London trip—that they should have lodgings, and that she should take her own provisions,—Joe resolved that on their arrival they should have a cab and go direct to Southampton Street.

When they reached the Metropolitan station, however, Joseph found that their luggage was sufficient in itself for one cab; so they chartered a couple, and in order that they might not be swindled, Joe rode in one and Mrs W. in the other.

Mrs Stubbs was full of curiosity and

wonder when she saw the two vehicles draw up at her opposite neighbour's ; and she could not make it out, as she told her kitchen slave, when a little crooked-legged fellow hopped out, like a cock sparrow, and gave his arm to a female Daniel Lambert, who rolled out of the second cab amongst half-a-dozen band-boxes and packages.

Nor could Sarah Jane make it out when Mr Wittle rang the bell, and said he wished to see the lodgings, and to take them for a week if they suited, and that the price was no object. Nor could Mrs Joseph Wittle make it out when she saw a pinched-up little woman float into the passage, throw up a pair of hands with enormous gloves upon them, drop a duster, seize Mr Wittle round the neck, and begin kissing him most savagely, stopping every now and then to exclaim, " My dear Joseph, my long-lost Joseph."

In fact, Mrs Wittle's jealous fears were so seriously excited, that she staggered backwards into the arms of Cabman No. 1,

who called out, "Hi, Bill—hi, lend us a hand."

Bill furnished the loan immediately, with the remark, "Here's a go!"

"Ain't it a lark?" observed No. 1 aside, and then calling aloud, "Hi, bring the old lady some water."

"Old lady!" exclaimed Mrs Wittle, turning round upon that unwary cabman, and sending him flying over No. 2 into the street, "I'll *old* lady you, I will."

"It's all right, Jemimah—don't go a getting savage, my love—it's only my sister," said Joe, as soon as he had escaped from that fierce little Mrs Jenkins.

"Your sister! Oh bless you," exclaimed Mrs Wittle, dashing upon Mrs Jenkins, and folding that little woman to her comfortable bosom, until Mrs Jenkins was nearly smothered.

The cabmen picked themselves up, and grinned in the passage, and the audience was recruited by a policeman, Mrs Stubbs's servant, a butcher's boy, a sweep, a dealer

in old clothes, and an organ-grinder. The latter, noticing that there was a considerable amount of kissing going on, and large quantities of luggage being released from the tops and insides of the two cabs, took up his position on the curb-stone, and thought it might be profitable if not appropriate to grind out the Old Hundredth.

This is how it came to pass that on the next day Mr Luke Howard, gazing listlessly across the road, saw that the paper "Apartments" had disappeared from Mrs Jenkins's first-floor front.

"Perhaps *she* had returned," he thought, —perhaps she had come back as mysteriously as she had departed. He would watch.

During breakfast he kept a sharp lookout upon the well-known window; and afterwards he stood close to Mrs Stubbs's blind, and saw innumerable people walk past and turn head over heels, and fall in two, and become bloated, over the flaws in Mrs Stubbs's window panes; for Mrs Stubbs

had had several of her windows mended with cheap glass, which must have been very disagreeable to a poor fellow seriously watching for the lady of his heart.

You see we have little sympathy with that wilful, stubborn North-countryman, because of our intense admiration for Laura Grainger, who was pining, in secret, for his love.

Let him stand there and watch, and pull his big whiskers in his anxiety; let him recoil in horror and disgust when that big, rosy, Summerdale landlady presents herself to his gaze, instead of her of whom he was thinking; what do we care?—what would any one care, who knew Laura Grainger, and knew that she was ready to give that white graceful hand of hers into his keeping?

Snub Mrs Stubbs, and kick that miserable cat, Mr Howard, and march savagely down the street, and be dissatisfied at the London wine—who cares? There is no rude valet at the corner of the street to be

kicked again ; but there is a sharp little telegraph-boy, who has entered the street from Covent Garden, making the best of his way to your lodgings, with an important message from Tyneborough.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MESSAGE.

MR LUKE HOWARD did not see the telegram until night, when he found that it was from Mr Mentz; it was to this effect, "Grainger is dead—come to Tyneborough."

Luke, in his lazy way, turned the message over, read it again, and looked up to the ceiling as if in anticipation of a full explanation, from somewhere above, of the cause and manner of Mr Grainger's unexpected demise. The ceiling not being communicative, Mr Howard appealed to the floor, then to the walls, and then to the fire, with equal success. Then he read the telegram again, threw himself into

Mrs Stubbs's best arm-chair, and wrinkled his brows at the fire.

"Dead!" he thought, "by Jove, that's strange; he was all right when I saw him three days ago. Ha! yes, dear me; well, Mentz might have been more explanatory. What shall I do? better go off at once, I suppose."

A knock at the door.

Mrs Stubbs entered to remind Mr Howard of the telegraph message. Hoped she didn't intrude, but thought it best afore retiring to bed just to mention it.

Mr Howard took counsel with Mrs Stubbs with regard to the trains, and decided that he would go to Maryport by the first train in the morning.

Meanwhile, Mr Zebidee Grainger was lying on his back at the chief hotel in Tyneborough, quite dead. The face was distorted, and the hands were tightly clenched as they were when he had died.

In the adjoining room, twelve burgesses of Tyneborough sat round a large table

at the head of which the Coroner was opening his inquest on the body. He said the case, which required their attention, was one that had excited the sorrow and sympathy of the whole town, the deceased being a gentleman of the highest character amongst them, and one who had earned the regard and esteem of the community. The facts were very simple, and he would briefly recapitulate them before calling the evidence which would be adduced. On the previous evening the deceased gentleman attended, as was his custom, the prayer-meeting of the Zebidee chapel—which he might observe, in passing, Mr Grainger had built, and endowed at his own expense.

At this reference to the liberality of the deceased, several jurymen quietly shot at each other thoughts of pious admiration.

He was (the Coroner continued to say) attending the Zebidee prayer-meeting, and taking an active part in the religious service of the night, when suddenly he was

observed to stagger, and fall. Several persons, who would be called, immediately raised him, and found that he was in strong convulsions; Dr Saltsem was called in; but he would tell them that on his arrival the poor gentleman had breathed his last. The medical evidence was not clear as to the cause of death; but it was not deemed necessary that a *post-mortem* should be held; if they thought however that a scientific examination should be made, he would order one accordingly.

The twelve jurymen exchanged inquiring glances, as the Coroner concluded his few remarks with the observation that he thought they would have no difficulty whatever in arriving at a satisfactory verdict.

The gentlemen then "viewed the body," and proceeded to hear the evidence, after which they "laid their heads together," and decided that the deceased had "died from the visitation of God."

Whilst the inquest was being held, Mr

Mentz was exhibiting signs of great surprise and mental anxiety. He walked up and down the little back parlour, and scowled and tapped his forehead in a manner that betrayed his great perplexity.

On the previous morning two bills had been dishonoured, two bills drawn by Mr William Howard, and one of the acceptors had declared most emphatically that he had never accepted a bill in his life. The second acceptor could not be found. Mr Mentz had shaken his head and said, acceptor No. 1 must be a very wicked person, and the bill was noted accordingly, and Mr Howard's account debited with the amount thereof.

This morning, however, whilst the inquest was going on, two other persons, whose bills were due, repudiated them, and swore they had never given Mr William Howard bills, although their acceptances with Mr Howard's endorsements were well known in the bank. This troubled Mr Mentz considerably, particularly when he

found that in the course of a few more days several very heavy bills would be due, and one of them by the person who had sworn yesterday that he never gave a bill in his life. This person was a ship's captain who resided in Tyneborough between his voyages; and the other two were brokers.

"It's very perplexing, very," said Mr Mentz to Luke Howard in the evening, "very perplexing."

"How does the account stand?" inquired Mr Howard, pulling his whiskers thoughtfully.

"With these bills, Luke, the balance against Mr Grainger's estate will be over ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand—ha—" remarked Mr Howard, "that's not so much, is it?"

"No, no, thou mayest say that; but if the next lot of bills are not met, Luke, thou mayest multiply ten by five," said Mr Mentz, looking at his partner.

"You suspect the stability of Mr

Grainger's estate?" said Mr Luke, returning the senior's gaze.

"Mr Grainger's account does not appear satisfactory," said the senior cautiously.

"These bills—what do you think of them?" asked Mr Howard, shaking off all that apathy of manner which we have previously noticed.

"I fear to say," was Mr Mentz's reply.

"Call in old Smalls," suggested Mr Howard.

"Dost thou think we had better not wait a day or two?"

Old Smalls was the chief clerk, and Mr Mentz remembered that Smalls had never been well affected towards the late Mr Grainger.

"As you please," said Mr Howard.

Whilst they were talking, a note was handed to Mr Mentz which he opened and handed to Mr Howard, who threw it down and said it was all over.

The note was written by Laura

Grainger. She said that she had been sent for in the midst of the unexpected trouble which had fallen upon the home of her step-mother; and at the request of Mrs Grainger begged to inform Mr Mentz, her late father's banker, that there was no money in the house, not so much as a shilling; that she had none, and that Mrs Grainger requested Mr Mentz to send a supply at once.

“What shall we do?” asked Mr Mentz.

“Send a hundred pounds,” said Mr Howard, promptly.

Mr Mentz was a little dubious as to the wisdom of this; but eventually Mr Luke Howard took the money himself, and handed it to Laura Grainger.

When he returned to the bank, he found Mr Mentz poring over the account of the late Mr Grainger. The old man looked up as soon as Mr Howard entered, and said,—

“Well, Luke, thou’rt soon back; how do things look yonder?”

“How do they look there?” Luke inquired, pointing to the open ledger.

Mr Mentz shook his head; whilst Luke took from his breast pocket a small bundle of papers. They were blue strips of paper, with an embossed seal at one end, and a name written across the narrow way of the slip.

“There!” said Mr Howard, with a blank expression of countenance.

“What are these?” Mr Mentz asked, anxiously passing several slips between his fingers.

“Blank bills,” said Mr Howard.

“I see that, I see that,” said Mr Mentz impatiently.

“All ready signed for acceptance, you see.”

“Yes, yes—well?”

“All that is necessary is to draw them for any amount.”

“Well, I don’t understand, now.”

“I will explain,” said Mr Howard.

“Do,” said the old man, fidgeting with the papers.

“I did not see Mrs Grainger; but I heard her moaning and crying, and encountered a couple of her children at the same game,” said Mr Luke Howard contemptuously.

“Of course, poor souls,—go on,” remarked Mr Mentz.

“I was shown into a room, where presently Laura, Miss Grainger, came to me. Rather surprised to see her: she seems to have taken all the affairs of the house upon her shoulders.”

“Fine girl, a noble girl,” said Mr Mentz, closely inspecting a signature, on one of the blank bills, with which he was well acquainted.

“She is, that’s certain,” said Mr Howard; “she talked a little about what she considered to be her duty and not her inclination; and was as calm as a saint. I told her, in confidence, that I feared there

was something wrong in her father's monetary affairs. It did not in the least surprise her."

"Humph! she hated her father, I verily believe,—bad trait that; but the only bad trait."

"There was no love between his second wife and her; but I found her like an angel in the house, as patient and gentle to her mother-in-law as if they had been desperately fond of each other. But passing over all this, I learnt that there was not a vestige of money in the place. In his safe Laura said there were some papers which might be connected with the bank. Mrs Grainger's lawyer came in at the time, and after a little discussion, gave his consent to my bringing these with me for your inspection."

"Well, and what do you make of them?"

Mr Howard drew his partner's attention to several of the blank bills, upon which receipts for money, advanced on

account, were written in pencil above the signatures: he also pointed out that most of the others bore traces of the use of india-rubber.

“Yes, I see that,” said Mr Mentz, perplexed.

“Then here is my explanation. I need not tell you that when captains and others arrive in port with cargoes they want money; and that it was customary with Grainger, as it is with others in his position, to give them cash on account.”

Mr Mentz nodded to signify that he was following his partner.

“Mr Grainger kept by him a stock of blank bills folded up in a convenient way for signature. I was with him one day when, in his outer office, he paid a fellow a hundred pounds. ‘Stay a moment, I like to have a memorandum of these transactions,’ he said, ‘just a mem., that’s all;’ and he took from his pocket a little strip of blue paper folded up, wrote upon it with his pencil, then chatting away dipped his pen into

the ink, and the fellow, owner or captain, I don't know which, signed it. And now I can explain what I did not see then, but which is clear to me now. When Grainger went home he took that little strip of paper out of his pocket, opened it, and smiled, as he rubbed the pencil marks out and laid it down ready to be turned into an acceptance, and passed to his account at Mentz and Howard's."

"Good heavens! I see it all," shrieked old Mentz, staggering to his seat, his face twitching with emotion.

"When these bills were due, he met them with fresh ones, and he could have gone on meeting them until Doomsday at this rate," said Mr Howard, tossing the blank bills about, and seating himself by the table.

"Then all the bills that are out will be dishonoured."

"Unless we fill up these on Grainger's own plan," said Mr Howard, grimly.

"Curse him! curse him!" exclaimed

old Mentz, stamping his feet. "Oh ! what an infernal serpent."

Mr Howard pulled his whiskers and looked vacantly at the open ledger.

"We are ruined, Luke, ruined. Howard and Mentz must stop."

Satisfied that this was an exaggeration Luke made no reply, but ticked off, with his pencil, the probable losses.

"Think of that psalm-singing hypocrite—think of that schism-shop being built out of our money ! Damnation, Luke, I could dash my head against the wall."

"Don't do that," said Luke, quietly, "we shall want it."

They *had* need of old Mentz's head most surely, and of old Smalls' too ; though both the old men said Luke Howard was the cleverest fellow of the two ; and to be sure the big-whiskered, blue-eyed chap did exhibit great shrewdness and commercial tact, in this little banking difficulty.

The funeral was scarcely over before the

whole particulars came out,—the rascally ingenious bill scheme, and the true character of the late Mr Grainger. Creditors became clamorous, and people talked of having the body exhumed. Some said the wretched man had committed suicide, and others cursed him, for hours together. It was soon discovered that he had been utterly, hopelessly insolvent for several years; and with this discovery half a dozen respectable tradesmen put up their shutters and became bankrupt. Death had stripped the sheepskin from the wolf's carcase, and the people saw the hideous reality.

Victims of the wolf were not only numerous in Tyneborough; but in London, and in Maryport too. Mysterious persons of Jewish extraction visited Tyneborough to make inquiries respecting certain bills; these were mostly wolves without disguise, and they gnashed their teeth and groaned, and stamped, and yelled when they found that Grainger was a wolf also.

The amount of the losses of Messrs Mentz and Howard had not by any means the effect which Mr Mentz had, in his grief and rage, predicted. They could have stood several such shocks, and still have maintained their credit and position. But the family of Mr Grainger were ruined. The very beds were sold from under them, and but for a public subscription they might have been turned into the streets. Laura Grainger insisted upon sharing their lot. She was his daughter; she had been a partaker of the fruits of her father's presumed wealth, and she would not desert his house in shipwreck.

"But you are in no way to blame," Luke Howard urged, "you were never with these people in their palmy days."

"That is one reason why I should be with them now," said Laura.

"You will pardon me if I confess that I cannot see it in that light," said Luke.

"I cannot make it any clearer, then, I fear, Mr Howard."

“Why should you suffer for wrongs, real or imaginary, inflicted upon other people by no aid or countenance of yours?”

“My father wronged this woman—he married her for her money, and he has left her destitute; he wronged my mother, not more than he has this miserable, wretched woman, who believed in his piety, thought his prayers sincere; he is the father of these poor deluded children,” said Laura, with a flush upon her cheek.

“Therefore *you* must atone—I don’t see it, Laura, I don’t see it,” said Luke.

“I cannot help it—I am resolved; my course is clear to myself, and I shall pursue it.”

“What do you propose to do?” then said Luke, contemplating the high-spirited woman, as she drew herself up to her full height, ready to brave all things, for those whom she had never loved until now, and whose helpless misery had excited her affection.

“ I have had a good education, Mr Howard, and I suppose I may say, partly at their expense ; I shall endeavour to turn what I have learnt to account.”

“ What ! become a teacher, or a govern-ess ? ” Luke asked, impatiently.

“ Perhaps,” said Laura, “ I have not quite resolved yet.”

“ Upon my honour, I do not see why you should do this,” Luke again urged. “ Let Mrs Grainger turn to ; she has been bitter enough against you, and she has plenty of friends amongst her own sect ; let her own girls work and toil : why should you ? ”

“ No good can come of our discussing the matter,—I have determined.”

“ You know, Laura, the great friendship of your father and mine ; you know the love my poor old dad had for you. By my father’s memory, I ask, I implore you to let me, to let the bank, assist you in some way.”

“ No, thank you,” said Laura, the tears

forcing themselves into her eyes, at the remembrance of old Howard and the happy days she had spent at Pentworth.

Luke could not reason her out of this resolve to sacrifice herself for her miserable family, and he felt himself forced into the expedient of surreptitiously sending, through the post, sundry bank-notes under cover to Laura, but directed to Mr Grainger's widow and orphans. These missives came to Laura, and, directed in a disguised hand, with the London post-mark upon them. She consulted Mr Mentz about them; and she had recourse to the family solicitor; but without clearing up the mystery.

Meanwhile Mrs Grainger set down the money to the credit of some pious admirer of her husband's—some member of the Zebidee flock, who, like herself, would not, could not, believe in his infamy. The devil hated all the elect, and he had succeeded in destroying her husband, and blackening his fame. Did not the devil

try to pull down heaven itself? Was it surprising, then, that he should wage war upon Mr Zebidee Grainger?

Laura sat and listened to her mother-in-law as patiently as if she thought in her mother-in-law's fashion; and she bore the woman's pious petulance, and her fierce arrogance, as though she owed that weak, miserable creature a great debt of gratitude.

The children soon looked upon Laura's kind acts towards them as their due; and when the governess was discharged they made all sorts of efforts to treat their sister-in-law a little worse than they had treated the governess.

Coupled with all this there were perpetual prayer-meetings; for a select few of the Zebidee flock persisted in believing, with the widow, that Mr Grainger had fallen in mortal combat with Satan, and that the blank bills had been signed in some diabolical way by the devil; that, indeed, the devil had done all that was

laid to the charge of the deceased saint in order to frustrate the heavenly efforts of the Zebidee church.

So these enthusiastic members of the Zebidee congregation dropped in at all hours of the day to hold wrestling feats with their great enemy. Sometimes the combatants would only be two or three, sometimes half-a-dozen; but their conflicts with Satan were terrific. The drawing-room was their battle ground, and their war-whoops nearly drove Laura Grainger mad; but she submitted, and even consented, on several occasions, to join in the encounters; but she knelt there and said her own prayers, and wept her own tears, and she always found a sufficient excuse to withdraw when Mrs Grainger called her friends from labour to refreshment.

It was, indeed, a hard lot for Laura, this change from Barnard to the ruined home of her dead and disgraced father! They wrote to her frequently from Barnard, and asked her to return—offered her a

home, offered her the same rooms which she had always occupied, the same freedom, the same friendship, the same affection. Laura cried tears of joy over their true and noble letters ; but she declined all their offers, and she made no complaint about her altered position.

The new path which lay before her, beset with thorns and thistles, was not her own selecting, she thought—the way was Heaven's own choosing, and she would journey in it.

CHAPTER XII.

“THE MEMORY OF THE HEART.”

THERE are some people who have never felt the sensation of a true and holy gratitude. Some people!—ay, thousands. You could point out several in your own circle, friendly reader. You know a man who, having borrowed your money, has hated you ever since. You could put your finger upon some prosperous fellow, who has lived to forget how you gave him water when he was athirst, how you fed him when he was hungry. You know a woman who has traded and lived on some generous brother, some poor relation, who has not been compelled to wait at the gate and be chidden from the door; and you know how they have gone and reviled the

hand that nourished them. That noble martyrdom which So-and-so suffered for his friend, that self-sacrifice of young So-and-so for a heartless girl! You know how they were repaid. But Heaven be thanked, there are bright sides to the darkest pictures; Heaven be thanked, there are grateful hearts in the world! May all that is sweet be theirs!

“What is grandeur, what is power?—
Heavier toil, superior pain!
What the bright reward we gain?—
The grateful mem’ry of the good.
Sweet is the breath of vernal shower,
The bee’s collected treasures sweet,
Sweet music’s melting fall, but sweeter yet
The still small voice of gratitude.”

We have not gone out of our way to drag Gray’s beautiful lines into this poor story. Mrs Massey was reading them, on the morning that Harry Thornhill was to leave Summerdale. She felt their force, she knew their power; for she had a grateful heart.

The story of Harry’s heroic sacrifice had touched her; and a religious grati-

tude to Heaven for bringing him, at the eleventh hour, to be the comfort and consolation of the man who had wronged him so much, strengthened her in her sorrow, and tinged her grief with a beautiful resignation.

It was not Paul Massey's fault that Harry Thornhill had not died an ignominious and miserable death. It was owing chiefly to Paul Massey's unfounded jealousy that Harry Thornhill's hopeful life had been changed to one of toil and weariness. She also had been to blame in the early stages of Harry's melancholy history. How nobly he had borne all this; what a sacrifice he had made for her happiness!

Anna could not help thinking of these things, in her loneliness. Had Paul Massey recovered, she would have continued to love him; for in woman's love there is little of reason; but it would not have been the love that was his before he fell from that high place which he had previously occupied in Anna's thoughts: it

would not have been the love which admires and trusts and worships and respects and esteems. When love undergoes a wrench, as violent as that which had almost annihilated Anna's, there is little hope of a sure restoration.

Yet Mrs Massey went to Paul's grave and strewed flowers upon it; she thought of him as he was when he wooed her at Denby Rise; when her whole soul thrilled ecstatic at the sound of his dear voice. But that seemed long ago now, and there followed it, memories sad and strange. The misery of those days, when she knew the secret of his unhappiness, seemed to her like years of wretchedness, enhancing the solemn gratitude of that happy knowledge of his comparative innocence. Poor Anna!—from the moment that she was alone she was like a frail bark tossed upon a strange sea,—now tempestuous, now dark, now dangerous,—and with only stray gleams of sunshine to illumine the new and mysterious way.

Harry Thornhill felt that he had passed through an ordeal too severe, too scorching, too heart-searing to give way now. He had fought a great fight, and had come off victoriously. He returned to the old country, crowned like a conqueror, with his defeated passions dragging at his chariot-wheels. Not that the world recognized his victory or knew of it. Some people thought he had made a fool of himself; others would not trouble to think about him; some said it was a strange freak; some imputed his absence to unworthy motives; he had contracted debts that the firm had not known of: a few said Harry Thornhill had done something which looked very romantic, but Maryport might rest assured that whatever he had done had been the right thing to do. You see many of the persons who had known Harry, in those past times, were dead; many had forgotten his kind actions; many had slunk away from the prosperous square, bruised and defeated in

the great battle; there had been panics in the money-market whilst Harry was abroad, and many a long list of names had appeared under a certain heading in the *Gazette*.

But whatever people said against Harry was said behind his back; for he had made money, and his share in the great house of Welford and Co. was not forfeited. Whether it might have been so in the eyes of the law we neither know nor care—it remained intact in the eyes of Mr Welford and his fellow-partner; and they were only too happy to propose that he should return to them, and take the place of the late Mr Mickleton; nay, more, Bailey, who returned from Paris the day after Harry had visited Maryport, expressed a desire to give up business altogether, and to relinquish the whole concern to Harry.

Mr Bailey was the proprietor of a fine estate, and had shares in several of the best concerns of the day; and he was tired of

shipping. What did it matter, he said, that he was only fifty, and that Welford was eighty? If Harry would only come in and undertake his share and his duties, he should. But let us not anticipate.

Harry was perfectly master of his feelings,—he thought. His dream of love had long since been over. But why did he keep thinking so? Nobody had charged him with dreaming again. Nobody had said that his heart would yearn to Anna, in these latter days. And yet he was continually defending himself from himself.

Perhaps it was the soul-stirring beauty of those uplands about Summerdale; perhaps it was the scent of those spring flowers—which were gradually being replaced by the first blooms of summer,—that bridged the past, and carried his thoughts back to days when he lived in a happy state of hope and fear and poetic doubts. Perhaps it was those nodding lilies,—sleeping above the shadow of the church, on the bosom of that silent river,—that kindled

sweet thoughts within him, and made him fear that old feelings were having new birth in his heart. The place was so peaceful, so heavenly, so soothing. The square tower of the church, peeping out from its foliated bower; the quaint old parsonage, with its ivy covering; the solemn cawing of those ancient rooks; the fading flowers on that new stone, just laid down in the grey churchyard. Who could resist these influences?

“Good-bye, Mrs Massey—good-bye,” said Harry, after a few words of sympathy and sorrow, “we have both had our trials, Heaven grant the peaceful time has come.”

“Good-bye, Harry,” Mrs Massey replied, in a voice that trembled with emotion, “I shall always pray for your happiness.”

“We shall meet again, perhaps,” said Harry, hesitatingly, and he pressed the hand which at one time he would have given worlds to have called his own.

"I hope so," said Mrs Massey.

"And, Miss Kate—I hope we may improve our acquaintance," said Harry to Mrs Massey's daughter, who reminded him so much of what her mother was, in those early days at Denby.

"Thank you, sir," said Kate, "I hope we may."

A few more words, and Harry was gone; and up in that three-cornered bedroom, at the Crown, he sat him down, and the fragrance of the roses would creep out of the leaves gathered so long ago in the great garden of memory.

Early in this story we have had something to say about gathered rose leaves. Harry Thornhill had almost forgotten that he had kept a few of those stray blossoms, which had been culled in the long-past days of Denby; if he had remembered them he would have scouted any idea that they could have retained their perfume so long.

A blessing be upon these gathered

leaves that will give forth their subtle essence, and charm the senses with memories of the time when they were young blossoms amidst a thousand summer flowers !

The maiden in the poem sat upon the cushioned seat, in the dazzling palace, and sung of Bendemeer. The roses had withered

——“That hung o’er the wave,

But some blossoms were gather’d while freshly they shone,
And a dew was distill’d from their flowers that gave

All the fragrance of summer when summer was gone.

Thus memory draws from delight, ere it dies,

An essence that breathes of it many a year ;

Thus bright to my soul, as ’twas then to my eyes,

Is that bower on the banks of the calm Bendemeer !

These lines might well have occurred to Harry if he thought about his rose leaves at all ; they came singing into our ear at this particular time, because Harry Thornhill and Paul Massey were boys at school when the poem, in which they are so gracefully set, was published. As Paul Massey had plenty of money, he

bought Mr Moore's book ; and Harry and he read it together, and Paul in his grand way frequently recited the Bendemeer lyric.

Did Harry think of this, in that quaint little room, as he smoked that solitary cigar, which he lighted anon? We think he did. What a hero Paul was, in those days, you have heard in the early chapters of our story. That he was in the habit of raving about a pretty girl whom he used to see at church you have also heard. Did Harry wonder what had become of that girl? Was she lamenting the roses, that withered so soon? Was she at peace, where all is peace—in the grave? Harry's thoughts were gloomy ; but whether he thought in this wise, deponent knoweth not.

That Mrs Massey was often in his thoughts we do know. It even occurred to him that she was as beautiful as ever. He believed that soft resigned expression—that kindly-sad look—in the big eyes, added a charm to the face, and brightened

its middle-aged loveliness. There was something exceedingly becoming in the quaker-like simplicity of Anna's plain black dress, and the little white cap.

Harry blew out his candle, and smoked at the open window, and quarrelled with these stray thoughts that wandered through his brain. Dear, tender memories cropped up now and then, and he sneered at them; yes, fairly sneered, for he thought himself a cynic now. That brave, grand, conquering schoolfellow of his—that *galant homme* whom he had worshipped—that splendid ship-owner's son, who had gone about the seas in his own yacht! What a coward he had been! Friendship and love—absurdity and rubbish. What had it been to him? But *she* had suffered, that girl at Denby Rise—*she* had suffered. Yes, no doubt; but how had he suffered! Who had suffered more than he? And even this girl had reproached him for his martyrdom. True, she recalled her hasty

words, and was sorry. Well, it was no use complaining now. He believed he had done the right thing, at any rate. Would he do as much again? No, certainly not.

Then the face in the trim little cap—the face with the soft, sweet, sad expression—came up again; Harry looked at it, and thought of it, and saw it that night, in a dream.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRUE LOVE THAT DID RUN SMOOTHLY.

FRANK GREY and Kate Massey began to gather their rose leaves in the same sunshine which was falling upon Summerdale when Harry left the moss-grown old place. They soon found themselves stealing away by that quiet river, past that old church, through that umbrageous wood, beyond those misty hills.

The wild rose was upon the hedges, mingling its odours with the honeysuckle. The young wheat was putting on the darker hues of June, and the mowing grass was waving in gentle undulations.

No wonder that Frank Grey was eloquent, in such scenes as these. Fresh from the noise and bustle of Maryport; fresh

from the smell of pitch and timber and dirty streets, and all the pent-up odours of a big city, Summerdale was, to him, a rural paradise, indeed. Kate Massey walked by his side, and Mrs Massey and Mrs Grey and old Anthony wandered after them. Anthony talked cheerfully of his efforts in behalf of Richard Grey; and Mrs Grey leaned proudly on her husband's arm, and was happy.

“Get him off? certainly we shall—I have no doubt about it,” said George, heartily.

“Perseverance will accomplish almost anything,” said Mrs Massey; but the widow was only thinking of her daughter, who looked back occasionally to smile at her mother.

“Heaven send we may—if we had Richard there would be nothing in the world I could wish for,” said Mrs Grey.

The fond mother, you see, had forgotten that poor girl of Maryport, whom she

used to love for loving Richard. She had only one wish, she said, now, the restoration of her son. Let us not be unjust to her—perhaps she did think of Bessie Martin; perhaps that night at the Caverns did come back to her memory.

George Grey thought of the girl, and said what a happy thing it would be if, when Richard returned, he could make up to Bessie Martin something of the disgrace and misery she had suffered through him.

Mrs Grey nodded her assent to this proposition, and changed the conversation, as she frequently did when Bessie's name was mentioned.

The sun shone down upon the little group, and made them look very happy, whether they really were so or not. To Mrs Massey there were only two figures in the landscape—those of Frank Grey and her daughter; and by and by these two became fainter in the distance; now they were hidden by trees and hedges; now a little hill would shut them from her view;

for the lovers walked faster than those who had professed to accompany them. But they could never have gone so far as to be beyond the loving solicitude of Mrs Massey.

High up in the hills that looked grey and misty from Summerdale, a boisterous brook had its birth ; high up in the misty hills amongst piles of broken rock, where the Titans might have played at “ duck-stone.”

The thousand little pebbles which had fallen from the Titans’ playthings rolled about in the babbling water ; the trees bent down their heads to see what was going on amongst their great straggling roots, and the brook laughed and shouted, as he bounded away from the rocks and the fir trees.

As the stream rolled on, crowds of hyacinths nodded from curious nooks and corners, trying to catch glimpses of their waving bells, in his radiant happy face ; but

the brook was too boisterous, high up in the rocks, to pay attention to the flowers, not one of which could reflect its pretty form in the stream, for the foam and spray he used to throw about, amongst the stones and tree-roots. Away he went, shouting and laughing, and secretly longing to be down in the Plain, which stretched away, in verdant meadows, until the distant hills shut them out from the far-off country beyond.

Down in the Plain a little winding shining, shingly brook, called the Ribble, glided through the meads; and its soft and gentle music was sometimes wafted away, like a zephyr-breath, to the young giant-brook of the mountain, until he of the Peak had longings to join she of the Plain, which made him dash onwards with redoubled vigour.

No obstacle could restrain the brook-born torrent of the hills. If a tree fell in his way, or a pile of rock interposed its rough front, the lithe lover of the sweet little Ribble would speedily overcome

them. Stopping for awhile, as if to gather strength, he would swell with his overpowering efforts, until he bounded over the obstruction with a shout of defiance, charging, like a white foaming war-horse, at the next opponent, and bearing on, with reckless rage, spoils of the noisy combat.

At last, maddened with the excitement of victory, and urged on by the gentle daughter of the Plain, he leaped headlong over a precipice; and hill, dale, and dell echoed with his shout, as he alighted in the broad open Plain below.

But the leap was a desperate one, and our brook of the mountain became much calmer after his first great ebullition of victory. He flowed along with a quiet murmur; and buttercups and primroses, and little trees and waving reeds, collected on his banks, and bowed to their counterfeits in the mirror which he made for them. Onwards he wandered, until the whisperings of the Ribble mingled with his subdued voice, as though they held sweet converse together.

Then, as if to carry out our simile of the lovers, the Ribble suddenly turned away, and went off into the woods laughing, yes, fairly laughing—as she entered the glen, —derisive laughter at he of the mountain, with whose earnestness she sought to flirt and to trifle. “I care not for you, rough son of the Peak,” her voice seemed to say amongst the trees; but she spoke not what she really felt, for she came back, at the turn of the hill side, and made up for her coyness by leaping into the arms of him of the mountain.

Then the son of the mountain married the beautiful meandering Ribble, and they flowed on through the world, blending their voices together; and their path, though sometimes rugged and rough, was often strewn with moss and with flowers.

They had rambled away almost to the birth-place of the mountain brook, Frank Grey and Kate Massey; they had seen him leap over the rock; they had seen him

join the Ribble; they had followed the course of the united waters until the river murmured, musical and low, through the Summerdale meadows, and rested by the church to whisper to the water-lilies.

And Frank said the brooks were like lovers; the union in the Plain was the marriage; and the soft flowing-onwards after was indicative of the happiness which followed.

He thought out the rest of the sketch afterwards, almost as we have drawn it,—we who know every nook and corner of the river's windings.

But Kate Massey only laughed, and not knowing what else to say to such bold wooing as this, she said Frank was very sentimental: and so he was. Show us any young man who, after being pent up for years in a smoky, dirty city, goes far away into some sunny place, where there are fields, and trees, and flowers, and brooks, and sweet perfumes, without becoming “sentimental.” Show us this rari-

ty, and we will show you a fellow whose society we do not care for.

“Sentimental!” of course Frank Grey was sentimental, and, of course, Kate liked him to be sentimental, and had not used the word reproachfully. Born at Helswick, and reared in Maryport, and a lover of poetry—what else could Frank be but sentimental, at Summerdale? Meet him in Beckford Square, and he would tell you the lowest quotation of freights to America, Rotterdam, Port Natal, or anywhere else, and he would have astonished you with his commercial knowledge; but meet him by that Summerdale river, standing by its fringe of reeds, and he would tell you what a great many poets have said about rivers—he would have descanted on wild flowers, and talked of the time when he gathered primroses on spring mornings.

Frank Grey would have been sentimental in the Summerdale meadows, even if he had not known Kate Massey, and

Kate would have been very much disappointed if he had not been sentimental; but she was puzzled a little at her lover's frankness, and he seemed to have entrapped her in his little sketch of the brook lovers. But Kate thought she would carry out the simile at all events; so she played the part of the coy little Ripple, laughed at Frank's protestations, and interrupted his most serious conversations by suddenly darting off to secure some particular wild flower.

And Frank would stand still and look at her; at her light silky hair escaping from her hat; listen to her merry laugh; and wonder why so much happiness had been reserved for him.

If he should lose her, after all! he thought; the thought was real pain; but it vanished in a moment when Kate's happy eyes looked up into his once more.

But for a whole week or more Frank had loved that Ophelia in the play at Maryport; had sat in the pit (yes, in the

pit, for he was only a junior clerk in those days), and almost blinded himself with tears when the love-lorn maid distributed her rosemary, and fennel, and rue. He had actually written an anonymous letter to the lady, and had serious thoughts of leaving Welford's, and becoming an actor himself. But he was only a boy then, though he would never forget the sudden feeling of bitter disappointment, aye, and disgust, which he experienced one night when he learnt how hopeless and absurd his passion had been. He had obtained an introduction to Hamlet, as the first step towards reaching Ophelia. This Hamlet was a very pleasant fellow, and one evening, after the play, condescended to drink a glass of brandy, in the little inn close by the theatre, with Frank Grey, the enthusiastic play-goer. By and by Frank ventured upon some mild criticism of the play, and then suddenly burst out into wild raptures of admiration for Ophelia.

The actor smiled a pitying, forgiving

smile upon Frank; for the lady who played Ophelia was notoriously a bad actress, and only held her position on the Maryport stage on account of some extraordinary favouritism on the part of the manager.

“You think her a good actress,” said Hamlet, sipping his brandy, and thinking to himself, “What’s the good of taking pains, and studying your part, to play to such fools as these?”

“Good! I think her magnificent,” Frank said; “could you, I ask it with all deference, could you obtain an introduction for me to the lady?—would such a thing be possible?”

“Oh, yes,” said Hamlet, laughing aloud. “Invite her husband in here and ask him to introduce you—he’ll soon do it.”

“Her husband!” Frank gasped, staring at Hamlet with horror, “why, her name is Miss Mackenzie.”

“Ah, ah, ah,” roared Hamlet, “’Pon my soul, Mr Grey, you are very green—

that red-haired fellow who plays second fiddle in the orchestra is her husband."

And it was so; and Frank Grey *was* very green at that time; for he was a country youth, who knew much more about the hills and dales of Helswick than about the customs of city life, real and imaginary. But it was a sad blow to Frank this; it was bad enough that he had made himself ridiculous, and been called green; but it was worse to discover that his charming Ophelia was the wife of that fusty, snuffy, foxy fiddler in the orchestra.

Frank Grey did not tell Kate Massey this little story as they rambled through those Summerdale meadows; but the time did come when he made his wife acquainted with it; and when they sat together in the boxes of the Maryport theatre and saw the veritable Miss Mackenzie, who had given up the juvenile lead, and from Ophelia had descended in the theatrical scale, and ascended in imaginary importance, to the part of the Queen. And this

was one of the funny episodes in Frank's life about which his wife used to joke him ; we have no desire to conceal for a moment the fact that Kate in due time became the wife of Frank Grey.

At night, when the sun had gone down and the mists were rising, they sat about the piano, whilst Kate, with her mother's touch, and her mother's taste, and her mother's descriptive power, brought forth sweet strains that wandered about the old room, and told the story of her heart, not forgetting its great sorrow, nor omitting its newly-found joy.

Frank Grey sat near her, and gave rein to his soul, letting fancy and hope and love have all their happy way. What had been his bitters compared to the sweets of that blissful time !

Mrs Grey pressed her husband's hand, and Anthony drew closer to her side, and felt as though there had been no sorrow, no bitters, no wanderings in exile,

no camp fires in Australia, no base calumniator.

Mrs Massey was a calm spectator, in widow's weeds, but he who had left her behind had not departed with that crime on his soul, which had been revealed to her on that melancholy morning when Paul Massey confessed, because his conscience refused to bear its burden any longer.

The music soothed and comforted Mrs Massey, who had now devoted herself to her daughter's happiness. There should be no more heart-break, she had said, if she could help it. Let us all say as much ; let us all strive as earnestly as Mrs Massey did to make good what we say—so shall we cultivate and increase the flowers that bloom in the garden of memory !

It might have been more exciting to the reader if the true love of Kate Massey and Frank Grey had fulfilled all that is proverbial about the course of true love—had some obstacle arisen to torture them

and thwart them. But as a veracious chronicler we cannot import barriers to their happiness which did not exist.

You may depend upon it that if they had been compelled to suffer they would have suffered bravely. Kate Massey had a spirit that could have endured a great deal of misfortune and unhappiness, though she did struggle and quake at those early doses of bitters which Monseigneur Fate would persist in administering, you remember. And Frank! Have we not already seen that there was mettle in him? Had he not been fighting his way steadily for years? He was not what you would call demonstrative. He did not rush at the hill he had to climb, at a break-neck pace, and wind himself with the first few yards. He commenced steadily and with determination, and he worked on. His heart might give way, now and then, when he found the road hot and dusty, when he was hungry and athirst, when he came to barren tracks with nothing but weeds and thistles.

Even on that very day when he went to Summerdale, you know, through the intervention of Harry Thornhill, he had given way a little,—he thought that burglary business in which his brother figured an insurmountable obstacle. But if he cannot conquer it, he will turn back and climb the hill by another route—perhaps even a more dangerous route—by narrow paths and by unfrequented ways, scaling glaciers and skirting precipices.

We shall see very shortly. It will surprise us if that little silky curl, which a certain jeweller will fix inside a golden locket, will not prove a talisman of sufficient power to scare away the bogie which for a time had stopped Frank's climbing.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO LETTERS.

“DEAREST LAURA,—

“It is really most unkind of you to persist in not answering my letters. I almost think I am to blame in humouring you so much; I declare this is the fourth letter I have written to you without receiving *any* reply whatever, and I have quite resolved that I will not write again unless you answer this *immediately*,—so there!

“You know, my dear Laura, how fervently I sympathize with you in your troubles; it is not right that you should reject this, and insist upon having all your sorrows *to yourself*. But if you have neglected my letters, and refused all our in-

vitations, I think I shall now *tempt* you out of your *strange seclusion*. Mr Luke Howard saw Frank in Maryport the other day, and said you were making a sacrifice of yourself almost to martyrdom, and that it made *his heart ache* to see you.

“Now, my dearest Laura, I conjure you, by the memory of *our first meeting* and all our vows of love, to answer this letter, and to comply with its request. We have all our *troubles and trials*, dear; how much both of us have suffered since we met at that *dear old Pentworth* !

“But it is not for me to dwell upon these things : sadness can hardly be in my heart just now, though even happiness *seems to have* a tinge of melancholy. I am going to be *married*, Laura. As yet I have no idea of the importance of this great change in woman’s lot; to me the only leading thought is, that I and *Frank* are *not to part any more*, until the end comes when we part to meet in a better world. Dear, kind Frank; and he talks of you

often, Laura. He *admires you* as much as I do, and I could nearly say loves you as much. We often sit and go through our visit to Tyneborough, and try to realize all its happiness over again. We should be able to do so *fully* if it were not for the *shadows* that belong to it, my own dear Laura. Then we turn to poor mamma *in her widow's cap*, and then we think of poor Mr Howard and your father; and we *do wish* we had you with us, that we might console you, and comfort you in your sorrow, and in your work, for Luke Howard says your solicitude for others *stops at nothing*. My poor dear Laura, why will you be so generous? I could almost blame you *for your very goodness*.

“Well, and now, dear, will you have guessed what I want you to do? Of course you will. It is *decided* that I shall have four bridesmaids. If I had four hundred there would not be one that *I love* so much as Laura Grainger,—and will not she come and see her dear little friend married?

Yes, you will, I know you will, my dearest, dearest Laura. So write *by return*, and say when you will come, and then we can arrange all about the dresses. I want your advice and counsel on a hundred other matters—do come.

“From your ever affectionate

“KATE.”

“MY DEAREST KATE,—

“I deserve all your rebukes, and I do not deserve to have kept your affection so long, after my apparent neglect. But believe me, my dear little Kate, that my not having written to you is no proof of any lessening of my affection for you; that you do believe this is made quite clear in your dear, kind letter now before me.

“Many, *many* times I have sat down to answer your letters, but I had so much to say in reply that I could not say, and so much grief and trouble to tell of that I would not write about, and so little of anything that was cheerful or pleasant to

say, that my attempts ended in blotted failures, thrown into the fire, with a sigh and a few tears. Then, you see, I commenced this letter with the intention of making it cheerful as it should be, but something or other pops into my mind just when I think I shall get along happily, and shapes my pen into another course. I wonder how those funny actors on the stage contrive to laugh and joke and caper when *they* have the heart-ache?

“By the by, you say Mr Howard had said it made *his* heart ache to see me in such trouble. I meet him sometimes, but very rarely; he is kind, and attentive, and as true-hearted as ever. But let me not talk of him; and let me say as little as I can about my own trials; they have been and are more than you can ever know; so great, that my absence from Tyneborough at present is absolutely impossible. I have longed, in many a lonely hour, to see you, *dear Kate*, and it grieves me to tears that I cannot be by your side

in that happy hour when you receive the altar-pledge of him to whom you have given your heart. Do not feel hurt, do not believe that it is possible I can be with you: some day you may know all. I shall pray for you, dear Kate, pray that you may have all the happiness which your generous nature, your pure, true heart deserves. You will be happy, I know you will. It makes me happy to think how happy *your* life will be.

“There is a sadness in joy sometimes, my dearest Kate, as you say. Sometimes I experience a quiet happiness which is made up of a mixture of sweet and bitter, the one tempering the other. The sacrifice which Mr Howard talks about has its sweets, dear Kate,—the sweets that come with the performance of duty. My conscience approves of all that I am doing, and God has blessed my efforts with success. You knew of the unhappy differences which existed between myself and my father. The grave covers all faults,—

let me only say that when I found a woman and children who had greater cause to complain than I had—his children—I could not desert them; I could only strive to make up to them a little for what they suffered at the hands of *my* father. I will not say more about this; but leave you to guess the rest.

“Some day, ere long, it is likely I may leave Tyneborough, and then perhaps we shall meet again. Meanwhile, dearest Kate, accept this vague letter, in which I have not said half of what I had intended to say, as some explanation of my silence, and pray believe me that it is impossible I can accept your dear sisterly invitation to Summerdale. But let me know, dearest, the day fixed for the marriage, that I may think of you, and fancy I am with you, and persuade myself that I hear the bells ringing merrily, as they will when you leave the church, with flowers under your feet, and with, I hope, a pathway of roses for you ever afterwards.

“Give my kind love to your dear mother, my best regards to your dear Frank, and believe me to be always your most true and affectionate

“LAURA GRAINGER.”

CHAPTER XV.

“SWEETS TO THE SWEET.”

A LITTLE more than a year had elapsed from the time that Frank and Kate were taking those quiet afternoon walks in the Summerdale meadows.

The quaint little town of Summerdale was all alive with festal preparations. Flags hung out listlessly in the still morning air, and wreaths of flowers were entwined from house to house.

The old stocks hid their ugliness beneath the mosses that almost covered them. The crows cawed in the elms above, and the pigeons mounted up on high; and then fell lazily over each other.

The Crown Hotel had a great banner above the old-fashioned sign, with the

letters M. & G. on one side in a circle, surrounded by the words "May they be happy," and on the other "Summerdale for ever."

Joseph Wittle, the landlord, stood outside, critically superintending other decorations; and Mrs Wittle, the big and buxom landlady, was eyeing Joe, from an upper window, with a quiet smile of admiration.

The four bells of Summerdale shook the old tower to its foundation that morning. They had never rung so merrily before. A band of music from a distant town played the Wedding March so frequently, that several Summerdale men,—with rosettes in their button-holes,—had actually whistled, correctly, sundry bars of the glorious composition.

The children toddled about and laughed, and climbed up into the ivy on the church walls, and peeped into the dim old windows.

Oak House was in a state of considerable excitement. The only calm and col-

lected person in it was Mrs Massey. There was an expression of settled serenity on her handsome features; she was happy in the happiness of her daughter. So far as her wishes could be complied with, the wedding was conducted with as little ceremony as possible; but Summerdale would not allow Miss Massey to become Mrs Frank Grey without great demonstrations of good will; whilst Harry Thornhill and Mr George Grey had conspired together, and obtained assistance from Mrs Grey, to make the wedding a very gay affair.

Harry felt sure it would be best to make the wedding as great a contrast as possible to that which had been celebrated in the sick room at Denby Rise nearly twenty years previously. He could not have explained to you why he thought so; but there are many things about which we have very correct feelings that we cannot explain.

To Frank Grey the whole affair was

a dizzy whirl of happiness. He scarcely saw the crowd that thronged about the old church porch; he never felt beneath his feet the flowers that, like a trusting Christian nature, only gave forth sweeter odours the more they were bruised. Frank heard the organ peal, and felt the cool atmosphere of the old church upon his heated forehead. The mouldering statues seemed to look down upon him, and the saints in the painted windows to bless the bride.

The sun shone upon Kate Massey, and threw out the group about the altar into a gorgeous picture. The background was the great painted window, with an altar-piece at its basement. The foremost living figure was the vicar of Summerdale, with his long white hair hanging upon his shoulders. At his feet knelt the bride — with her hand in her husband's — a bride of surpassing beauty. Close by were Mrs Massey, two bridesmaids, Mrs Grey, and Harry Thornhill. Upon this group the sun shone through the illu-

minated window, beaming on the chief figures, and just relieving the other actors and lookers-on with subdued lights and shadows.

At night Summerdale was ablaze with tar-barrels and fireworks, and the Crown Hotel was illuminated so magnificently, that everybody said it was a happy day for Summerdale when Mr Wittle entered it, and a happier when he became landlord of the Crown. A few days afterwards Joe procured copies of the *Morning Post*, which had seldom, if ever, been heard of before in Summerdale, and he cut therefrom, and framed, a paragraph, which we shall reproduce, because it alludes to a change in the firm of Welford and Co., which we should otherwise have to describe:—

“The pretty little town of Summerdale, in the county of Warks, was the scene of great festivity on the 5th inst., in commemoration of the marriage of Miss

Kate Massey, the only daughter of the late Paul Massey, Esq., of Oak House, to Francis Grey, Esq., a member of the eminent firm of Welford and Co. (now, we believe, Welford, Thornhill, and Grey), the great shippers of Maryport.

“The marriage took place at the parish church, which was crowded in every part. The bride wore a white *glacé* silk dress, with a flounce of Brussels lace. The wreath was composed of jessamine. She was attended by four bridesmaids:—Miss Edith Morris and Miss Emma Morris, daughters of the Rev. J. Morris, B.A., Vicar of Summerdale, and honorary canon of Warks Cathedral; and Miss Amelia Fitz and Miss Henrietta Fitz, daughters of Dr Fitz. They wore white grenadine, with pink dresses and *tulle* bonnets, trimmed with forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley. The church was beautifully decorated. The ceremony concluded, the guests, a large and locally distinguished party, partook of a sumptuous

breakfast at Oak House, the residence of the bride's mother, whose great benevolence and amiability have endeared her to the people for miles round Summerdale. After breakfast the happy couple started for Paris. In the afternoon 100 persons sat down to a dinner, at the Crown, given by Harry Thornhill, Esq., the bridegroom's 'best man,' and in the evening the little town was illuminated."

Harry Thornhill went home to Maryport—went home to his bachelor house, and thought of the two young people whose hopes had been so happily realized. He contrasted his lot with Francis Grey's. He thought how one man walked on comparative rose leaves through life, and how another plodded on, over thorns and sharp stones.

Frank Grey, the son of a poor carpenter, had risen to wealth and position, and had married the woman of his choice; had married her and taken her away to

be his, always—the daughter of her whom he (Harry Thornhill) would have given worlds to call his own.

What a different thing loving had been to Harry Thornhill! It had blighted his whole life. True, he had tasted the questionable sweets of loving, with the unmistakeable bitters of losing. But his love had blasted and blighted friends and foes; had poisoned friendships; and nearly been blackened by murder.

And now that middle age had come—now that all the robustness and animation of youth had gone, Anna was alone. The charm of her life was broken; her uncle's dearest wishes were frustrated. And he, Harry Thornhill, was alone too. He had thrown himself energetically into the business of Welford and Co. since his return; he found it more necessary than ever, after that first meeting with Anna at Summerdale, to busy himself with the active duties of commercial life. Careless as he usually was of society, he went to

all sorts of routs and drums at Maryport, where he soon became interesting and attractive. Amongst the ladies he was the eccentric gentleman who had been drowned.

But he was very much alone, for all this. He breakfasted alone; he dined at his club; he went home to solitary slippers and a bed-room candle. Well, he was used to it, you may say; and if he did not like it, why didn't he marry? Plenty of women would have had him and made him happy; women more deserving his love than Anna Lee. No doubt they would. There was many a beauty in Maryport who would have been proud to call Mr Thornhill husband; many a scheming mamma who would have been happy in confiding the happiness of her daughter to any member of the eminent firm of Welford and Co. There was certainly a great blank in his life to be accounted for; but what of that? Some people said Harry had lived too fast, and was compelled to run away from his creditors. Others

said he had gambled, and that the fiction of his death had been necessary, in some way, for the credit of the firm. Several persons, who were in the secret, said he had fought a duel, and killed his man ; and that the fight was all about the dead man's wife with whom Mr Thornhill had eventually eloped.

Occasionally Harry would call upon the Greys, and have a chat with old George about Australia and Summerdale, and with Mrs Grey about Denby Rise, until he was wearied with explanations of various impossible schemes for the liberation of Richard Grey. The familiar face of Mrs Grey, changed though it was into that of a very old woman, reminded him of those old times by the sea. Indeed, everything in Denby reminded him of the past. He had schooled his memory successfully in a strange land ; but Maryport was so much a part of his past, that Denby Rise itself could not at times have reminded him more of those days we wot of. The breeze which came

up the river and blew down the avenues of the square came from Helswick bay. He knew it; and once he had almost wondered whether, if he got aboard the old steamer, which was still plying from Maryport to Helswick, he would find Squire Mountford and his beautiful ward in the old house up the valley.

A week after Frank Grey's marriage, Harry Thornhill made an excuse to visit Summerdale. He left his portmanteau at the Crown, and made a formal call upon Mrs Massey. And he found her alone—miserably alone, Harry could not help thinking.

The pale cheeks had recovered their healthy hue. The removal of the guilty shadows which for a time had clouded the closing days of Paul Massey and the happiness of her daughter, had done much to smooth the sorrow occasioned by Paul's illness and death. Had Paul died as he had lived, her hero, her noble, self-sacri-

ficing cavalier, her ideal of true and holy manhood, the shock might have killed her. But she had received her deadliest hurt during his life-time, when she saw the idol she had worshipped broken at her feet; when the man whom she believed to be the truest gentleman living confessed himself a coward and a murderer.

Harry did not remain long at Oak House; but he remained long enough to converse with Mrs Massey for a full hour, and long enough to let Mrs Massey see that his was a lonely, comfortless life. Some necessary inquiries, with reference to the title deeds to Denby Rise, had led to the introduction of the days when Uncle Mountford was alive. And Anna, with a charming womanly frankness, said what happy times those were.

“Ah, Mrs Massey,” said Harry, “if we could only have seen what would have come to pass.”

“I fear there would have been little change in my career,” said Anna, bending

her eyes upon the floor; "but believe me, I would have sacrificed anything to have saved you, Harry Thornhill, from the life of martyrdom which you have lived for my sake. It has often, of late, been in my mind to express to you the deep sense of my gratitude to you, and my sorrow, my lasting sorrow, that I should have been in any way the cause of inflicting upon you so much misery."

"We cannot command our destinies, Mrs Massey—Anna,—if you will permit me to call you Anna," said Harry. "It is something to have won your gratitude. Could you have loved me—we may talk of these things now, Anna, we are no longer young—could you have loved me, no man would have been happier than I."

"You acted a noble, generous part, sir; the part of the really great man. Self-sacrifice is the truest heroism."

"I could not bear that you should be unhappy; it was hard to live and have the reputation of having met with the death of

a drunkard ; it was hard to see the man who had—but let me say nothing against the dead ; it was hard to be an exile and a wanderer ; harder than all, Anna, it was to lose your love ; but how bitter would it have been to have made you unhappy, to have stepped between him and you, and denounced him. When you thought me dead, I saw you walk hand-in-hand with him ; I heard you talk of your marriage arrangements ; I saw you happy. Months afterwards news of your marriage came to me ; next of the birth of that dear girl who has left you now for a husband's roof ; always I heard of your great happiness, of your husband's devotion. I should have been a coward indeed had I broken in upon the sunshine of your life ; I should have been unworthy of your gratitude had I not hastened to England when your servant found me out and begged me to come to your assistance."

"Your very trials must have made you happy, sir ; the consciousness of having

done so much that is noble must have a quiet blissfulness of its own," said Anna, raising her eyes to Harry's bronzed face.

"I think I could be happy now," said Harry, "if I dared to think how." (You hear this fellow, who had been setting up for a cynic!)

Anna's eyes fell again, but there was no sign of displeasure; on the contrary, there was something in her manner which seemed to encourage Harry to disclose all his thoughts.

"You know the story of the man who discovered the elixir of life; how he outlived all his friends, all his pleasures; how all the old associations disappeared; how he was left alone, as it were, a solitary wanderer in the world; and how gladly he relinquished his great secret and rested from his labours. My life seems as lonely as his must have been, with this exception, that there is one who knows my story; there is one who can walk with me in those richly-stored galleries of memory, in which it is

misery to walk alone ; there is one who knows who I was, what I was, what were my hopes, whom I loved. If the man with the secret of life could have had one companion who knew him when he was young, who knew his little world at home, he might have lived on and been happy. Do my words offend you, Anna ?”

Harry asked this latter question almost in a whisper, and Anna thought of all his sufferings, and said “No.”

“We will not talk of love then, Anna ; but we may say something of respect and esteem and affectionate regard. It is the sober, thoughtful period of life with us now ; we are both alone, we have known each other almost from childhood ; may I go on ?”

“Yes,” said Anna.

“In the ordinary course of things our lives are little more than half spent ; let us go down the hill together, Anna ; let me be your guardian, your protector, your husband in these latter years.”

Gratitude alone would have been sufficient to prompt almost any woman to accept the hand offered under such circumstances as these. But there was something in Anna's regard for Harry Thornhill more than gratitude: it was not what we may call love, but it was a beautiful mixture of gratitude and sympathy and pity, which goes a long way towards making a lasting and happy union of hearts and hands.

This time, Thornhill went back to Maryport happier than he had ever been in his life. The old place seemed to have undergone quite a magical change within a few hours. Even in those long past days, when Squire Mountford was alive, it had never been so delightful to inhale the breeze which wandered up the river into Beckford Square, and know that it came from Helswick bay.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS.

How cheerily the ships came into port now; how musically the waves danced about the painted prows. They all came with the breezes of Helswick bay in their sails. Harry Thornhill would go to Helswick at once now, and look at the old place again. He would walk round the house in the valley, and think of the realization of his hopes at last. He would fancy the old days had come back again.

Down the river he went accordingly, far away, on board that same steamer, commanded by that same captain. The officer was grey now, and his face was tanned and wrinkled; but he remembered

the circumstance which Harry recalled to his recollection; he remembered the boat puffing off with the news; and the old man was delighted to find that Harry Thornhill was still alive.

The steamer rose and fell and panted as it had done in those past years, and Helswick church hove in sight above the rocks, as it had been wont to do; and the sun shone upon the distant windows of the house in the valley.

Pleasant, happy sights these to Harry Thornhill now! There was an occasional sigh at the memory of that dark, bitter morning, when he looked through the telescope in Mat Dunkum's cavern; but sweeter memories crowded in upon him, making the little voyage a happy one.

On the following day he encountered Mr and Mrs Grey on the beach; they were delighted to see Mr Thornhill, and Mrs Grey showed him a letter she had received from her son Richard. It was a blurred, shabby scrawl, in which the con-

vict thanked his mother and father for their efforts to obtain his release, but candidly stated that he thought they might be better employed. He questioned whether he could ever now be an honest man, though he was willing to try if they could set him free. "Willing to try:" Mrs Grey dwelt upon these words with hopeful comments, and was sure the boy would speedily be reformed when once they got him home again. It was killing work, labouring in irons, Richard said; but from all he heard, it was worse to be a discharged convict without friends or money, than to be in the establishment. If he could only have been a soldier years ago, he went on, things might have been different with him; but they mustn't expect too much when he did get his pardon or license.

Whilst they were talking, a little dark figure lingered near them, as if in the act of listening. It was a woman in a dark cloak, with a hood that partly concealed

her features. When she found that she was observed, she hurried on in the direction of the Denby caverns. The circumstance did not strike them as at all extraordinary, and only interrupted their talk for a few moments.

How should they know that the woman in the cloak was Bessie Martin?

On, past the rocks, and round the corners beneath the cliffs, the poor woman walked, in the sun. Sometimes the sea kissed her poor little feet, and obliterated her footmarks in the sand. When she came to a bend in the coast, which led up to the cottage, formerly occupied by Mat Dunkum, she sat on a bit of rock to rest.

A little beyond, and shut out now from communication by way of the beach, were the caverns, the sea rolling in and out with a low wailing, moaning sound. The sea-birds were sailing on the waves, and in the air, or sitting gravely on the ledges of the rocks.

What mysteries were there in those dark caverns? What unseen mystic forms went in and out with the waters?

Several of the caverns had never been accessible to human feet, and into some of these even the birds did not venture. Bessie looked at the caverns with a dull, blunted gaze; but her eyes were fixed only upon the one where she had seen Mat Dunkum's boat lying in the days that were gone—upon that cavern where, at the opening of this story, we saw the boat bound on shore with that handsome curly-headed boy and his companion; that handsome boy—with the telescope under his arm—dreaming of being a pirate chief.

Might not something have been done for that boy, had he fallen into good hands then? Or was he only born to have that luxuriant hair dressed in a gaol? Or did his fall, and its attendant miseries, all arise out of Mrs Grey's girlish flirtations before her marriage?

Take the case of one little wrong, and see how its eddying circles fill up the great lake of human existence. A pretty young country woman is partly engaged to a Denby boatman, one Mat Dunkum. This man is desperately fond of her. She casts him off for a carpenter's foreman, one George Grey. Mat Dunkum is a man of strong revengeful passions, and he vows a malicious vow against the woman who has jilted him. Mrs Grey was always a light-hearted, merry girl, and fond of the attentions she received, and the tributes paid to her beauty. It was not right that she should carry this frivolity into her married life, but she did so, and we know how it aided Mat Dunkum's diabolical plot. The end was that her husband deserted her, becoming a voluntary exile in a foreign land, and leading a miserable life. For the want of fatherly care and guidance, the wretched woman's son, Richard, falls into bad hands, and enters upon a wicked, desperate career. This son, in his turn,

blasts the life of Bessie Martin, entailing on her miseries upon miseries; and she unconsciously influences the happiness of Luke Howard (whom she had never heard of until she saw him), making him blind to his own welfare, and to the happiness of a pure, good woman. Thus do Folly's eddies spread and spread until they touch the furthestmost shores.

When Bessie had rested awhile, she climbed over the stones and broken crags, and went to the well-known—alas! too well-known—cottage. The windows were broken; the roof had partly fallen in; and a few sprigs of ivy were endeavouring to cover, adorn, and strengthen the doorway and the window sills. Even the cottage was better off than poor Bessie; it had the friendly ivy to console it in its desolation. But she was an outcast; unknown, unfriended, alone with her great sorrows. She entered the doorway, and startled an owl, which blundered from its hiding-place and

stared at her with its dark glittering eyes, which could see nothing. Bessie uttered a little scream, and passed out, over the thistles and the nettles, wending her way along the road where Mrs Grey and Joe Wittle had found her on that night when she had gone forth to search for Richard Grey.

“Oh that I had died then,” she said, as she paused to contemplate the bank where Mrs Grey had laid her in that fainting fit.

A thrush went on singing blithely in a tree close by, notwithstanding her misery ; and the sun began to make the trees and the hedges golden.

She hurried on through a by-path over the fields, towards Helswick—over those very fields where she had met Richard Grey on that bright May morning.

When the church spire peeped forth above the rock in the distance, she sat down and watched the sunset. A great red disc, it gradually went down behind the sea,

until Helswick steeple was like a shaft of fire, and the houses on the hill were covered with erubescant flames. For what, she thought, was all this beauty, all this marvellous loveliness? It seemed to mock her—it seemed to tell her that this was no place for her—it seemed to chide her back to the big city, where the sun went down in fog and mist, and never tinted the steeples and the windows with golden lights.

When the sun had disappeared, Bessie rose and hurried on; and by and by she came to Helswick, and passed along the road where we saw Richard Grey pass when he was a boy, round by the churchyard, and into a little house in the lane. Bessie paused at the threshold of the cottage where she had spent her childhood. There was no light, and a paper was posted on the closed shutter “To Let.”

She drew her cloak about her shoulders, and went into the market-place, past the vicar’s residence, past a hundred places

which were familiar to her when she was a child. At length she came to Beachstone's shop; but the Beachstones were either dead or had gone away to some other town, for there was another name on the sign now, and fresh faces behind the counter.

Bessie knew the poor quarters of the town, and to them she now directed her steps. Selecting a lodging-house, where all persons were received who could pay for their entertainment, she went inside, and at her own request was at once shown to her bed-room.

"There is a train, I believe, at five in the morning, but it's quite ten miles to walk," said the female attendant, in reply to a question.

"Please to let me lie here until one o'clock, and then I will go."

"We shall be all abed then, and we lock the doors and take out the keys; give me sixpence, and I'll get up and let you out."

“There’s more,” said Bessie, handing money to the attendant, who left the room without disguising her agreeable surprise at the lodger’s liberality.

At one o’clock Bessie was ready to start, and the woman gave her a cup of coffee, and received the fee for the lodging.

It seemed as if Bessie were re-enacting, in a sort of delirium, that terrible journey when she ran away, in the night, from Beachstone’s; but happily it was Summer now, and the morning was mild and balmy.

When she reached the station there was no one there; but by and by the pointsman came and opened that little box where she had rested and warmed herself. She had hoped that the same old man would have been there: she had some vague feeling that he would do something for her, that he would say kind words to her; but her hopes were all shattered. The pointsman who spoke to her now was a gruff, surly fellow. She would have an

hour to wait, he said, and the station-house doors wouldn't be opened yet.

Bessie thought her heart would burst now; for she had been reckoning upon hearing the old pointsman's kind, compassionate voice; but she said nothing, and sat down to wait. The sun had risen, and the dew on the hedges was melting.

Where had the sun been since she saw it last night? Had it lighted upon any one more wretched than she? Oh, that they might go down with it when it departed again, and rest from their troubles, all who were like her! she prayed.

Anon a luggage-train came lumbering on in the distance; but it did not stop, as that train had stopped on the winter morning: it roared, and groaned, and creaked, and shook the little platform; and then a lark started up from a meadow close by, and soared up to heaven with its morning song.

When the passenger-train came screaming out of the tunnel half-a-mile off, the

lark disappeared from view, and Bessie's thoughts came back from the sky, whither they had wonderingly followed the bird.

The train had picked up many people that morning before it arrived at the little station where Bessie took her ticket.

We lose sight of her in a crowded third-class carriage, and stand, in imagination, watching the train as it goes panting and screaming on its way.

Let the signal fall, Mr Pointsman ; and open yon little gate, that we may get away into the meadows, and pray Heaven that the eddies have reached the shore at last.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM BECKFORD SQUARE TO SUMMERDALE.

HISTORY, they say, repeats itself. Harry Thornhill appeared almost to be re-enacting what had long since past.

You remember how on a certain day in the week, in the early part of this story, he was in the habit of calling Frank Grey into his room, and asking a particular question; you remember how he used to order a cab and drive to the steamer that carried him down the Maryport river, and into Helswick bay.

Years had passed away, eighteen or more; the girl of his heart had chosen another, and he (the rejected one) had been away from England during nearly all these years—had been dead to all the

world : and yet here he was now, packing his portmanteau, and ordering his cab, and going off, on a certain day in every week, to see that same woman whom he had loved in vain, so long ago.

But he did not always go alone now, and he went by railway and coach instead of by cab and by steamer.

There frequently accompanied him two persons who were very talkative and very egotistically happy. One of these was a lady of considerable personal attractions ; a bright-eyed, fair-haired young lady ; and the other was a tall, gentlemanly fellow, who evidently doted upon his companion.

During the journey these two would frequently whisper in each other's ears, and then smile and laugh and nod. They lived at Hightown, these two, as nearly everybody knew in Maryport. For the gentleman was making a name in the port, as the chief projector of some remarkable scheme for placing the city in the highest possible position as a port.

Some persons objected to the city being placed in the highest possible position as a port, simply because they were making a large amount of money by a monopoly of trade which could not exist if Maryport became what Mr Frank Grey predicted it would become should his plan be adopted. The citizens were up in arms against the monopolizers, but these gentlemen would not budge an inch; and no wonder. They did not wish to give up their revenue—or, at any rate, to risk its being cut off—from a fat, thriving monopoly. The local press called upon them to make golden sacrifices on the altar of their native city; but the only golden sacrifice which the monopolizers made was at the shrine of St Stephen's, where they heaped up many, many golden sovereigns to oppose the schemes set a-foot by Mr Frank Grey and his supporters.

So you see Mr Grey's name was becoming popular in Maryport, and his wife and he frequently went with Mr H.

Thornhill, on a Friday, to visit Summerdale.

On one of these Fridays the conversation turned upon Tyneborough, and that visit of Kate's to Uncle Howard.

Mrs Frank Grey had written, over and over again, to Laura Grainger without receiving any reply ; and Mr Grey had only recently returned from a business trip to Tyneborough, during which visit, by the desire of his wife, he had made every inquiry about Laura. And on this Friday, as they were journeying to Summerdale, he was repeating the result of his inquiries, for the benefit of Harry Thornhill.

“ You remember the death of Grainger, and the exposure which followed. Kate's friend, Laura, it appears, had never been on good terms with her mother-in-law, and had never forgiven her father for his second marriage. She had therefore lived away from the family, visiting her father's house occasionally. When the crash came, however, Miss Grainger insisted upon de-

voting herself to her mother-in-law and half-sisters. Mr Howard and his partner Mentz offered to assist her, but she declined all aid: her father, she said, had had enough money which was not his own without her continuing in the same path."

"Poor Laura!" sighed Kate.

"Did you see her then?" asked Mr Thornhill.

"Please not to interrupt, my friend," said Mr Grey, taking his wife's hand in his. "I did not see her; but I saw Mr Mentz and I saw Mr Howard. Miss Grainger opened an academy at Tyneborough, and gave instruction in various branches of education; and she had a class for elocution, in which she was a great adept. They say her Shakespearian readings were marvellous. But she gave up the elocution class, in deference to Mrs Grainger's religious scruples. The old woman is a strict Primitive Methodist, and nearly went mad at the bare idea of her daughter-in-law reading Shakespeare. Miss Grain-

ger made sufficient money to keep together a decent home. Her greatest trial, old Mentz said, was the ingratitude of those for whom she was working. She had not said so in words; but both Mentz and Howard knew that this was so. Mrs Grainger did not feel that Laura was doing any more than she ought to do."

"How glad I am that I continued to write to her, notwithstanding she did not reply," said Kate.

"I am sure your letters would be a source of great consolation to her," said Frank. "I suppose her pride would not let her write; for Howard said he never saw such a proud girl. She used to be anything but proud before; but when the trouble came she held her head as high as if she had come into an immense fortune."

"What else did that great unimpressible fellow say of her?" Kate asked, with some little asperity.

"He expressed intense admiration for

her spirit and character," said Frank, looking at his wife.

"Anything else?"

"He said she was very silly to sacrifice herself for such a woman as her mother-in-law."

Kate sighed; but she had promised never to breathe a word about that other sacrifice of love and devotion which poor Laura Grainger had made.

"After a short time Miss Grainger gave up her academy, and bade her friends good-bye: she had received an engagement in London, she said, which would enable her to maintain the family in better style; and perhaps also her income might be sufficient for her to devote a portion of it to the relief of some poor broken-down tradespeople who had suffered through her father's misconduct."

"Noble girl," exclaimed Harry Thornhill; "I should like to know this big-hearted friend of yours, Mrs Grey."

“We must find her out, Frank, and insist upon her visiting us.”

“There will be no difficulty, I imagine, in finding her out,” said Mr Grey, “though there appears to be considerable mystery about the nature of her employment. Nobody knows what this engagement is; but that it is a profitable one, others besides Mrs Grainger can testify.”

The conversation was brought to a close by the arrival of the passengers at the station, where the Summerdale coach was in waiting; and where also a handsome private fly with two horses, recently introduced into Summerdale by Mr Joseph Wittle, was in readiness to convey Mr and Mrs Grey and Mr Thornhill to Oak House.

We follow them, in imagination, along the white highway, fringed with its tall green hedges; we see the big lumbering coach blundering on behind the shining carriage which Mr Wittle himself is driving; we see the flowers in the hedge-rows,

and smell the hawthorn blossoms. We see the old town, in its covering of thatch, nestling amongst the trees, and the old men and women standing at their doors to look at the coach stop before the Crown, and to watch the new fly going merrily along, round the corner, to Oak House. We see the tall elms and the mouldering stocks, the pigeons whirling in the air; we see the old steeple jutting up above the trees, and hear the rooks cawing in the branches above the parsonage; we see the water-lilies nodding to each other on the water—we think of the peace of Frank and Kate typified by that smoothly flowing river; we see a gentle smiling face at the library window of Oak House; and we think it is nearly time we wrote FINIS to this poor story.

Whether the story was worth telling is a question we must leave with our readers. We fear we have not told it artistically—we fear that it is too much like a double story, that we have not bound the cha-

racters together with a sufficiently strong bond of mutual interests. Fear! We fear all sorts of things; fear we have preached too much; fear we have been too descriptive; fear we have not been descriptive enough; fear we have not introduced sufficient dialogue; fear we have overdone the dialogue; fear a thousand fears that we suppose all young authors fear: but enough about the story-teller, let him finish his tale.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“LOST, AND FOUND.”

THE sun had gone down upon Maryport, and the moon was trembling in the waters of the dock opposite the inn where Mrs Beachstone's assistant had rested after that weary journey from Helswick, years ago. A couple of tug-boats lay beside the dock wall, waiting, when the tide should serve, to take out a long line of ships bound for many distant countries. A green blind still shielded the bar parlour of the Dock inn from the vulgar gaze of the seamen who loitered outside.

When the sailors were gone, and the neighbourhood of the basin was comparatively quiet, a woman who had been walking round the basin since sunset

approached the old inn. Though the weather was quite warm, she drew a dark cloak closer about her shoulders, and shivered. The light, which came out from the sanded passage of the inn, fell upon her, and she entered the house.

She went into the bar: the landlady started at sight of her, and no wonder, when she saw a woman so pale and emaciated, with such big dark eyes, and such heavy black hair, and otherwise resembling that poor girl whom she had never forgotten.

"I am Bessie Martin," said the woman, looking round the room, with that vacant wandering gaze which had caused Mrs Robinson so much uneasiness on the day when Bessie disappeared.

The landlady knew the look again. "Why, dear heart alive," she exclaimed, "how you have frightened me, surely."

"Did I?" said the woman, shivering again, and gathering her cloak about her.

"Did I? yes; come in, come in; why,

how ill you look," Mrs Robinson replied, pushing a chair towards her.

"Will you let me die here?" the woman asked, still standing; and with such a melancholy, helpless expression that the landlady hurried towards her, lest she should fall.

"Dear heart alive! why, whatever is the matter?" said Mrs Robinson, putting her arm round the woman for support.

"If your husband objects I can pay—I have some money left—saved on purpose for you—saved from the poor and wretched—"

"Ah, Lord ha' mercy on him," said Mrs Robinson, with a sigh, "he's in a better world, I hope; but money's hard to get; I've had the baileys in twice since my old man died."

"Is it money you want, is it?" asked Bessie Martin quickly, looking eagerly into the landlady's face, and taking a small packet from her bosom.

"No, no, not now, never mind; sit 'e

down now and rest a little," said the landlady, leading her to a chair.

"There, do have it; do take it; don't fear, it was never mine; it was his, my father's; he left it to me in his will," said Bessie, with great eagerness, and thrusting the packet into Mrs Robinson's hand.

"Don't 'e excite yourself, my dear," said the landlady.

"Do take it; I have saved it,—saved it, oh, so long, for this day, for you, for you, my dear," Bessie went on, as she pressed the landlady's fingers over five ten-pound notes.

"La, bless me, whatever shall I do?" said the landlady, looking at the notes.

"Keep them, do, do—I kept them through all, and I have wandered here—I could not eat anything—I did not want them—no, no, they are for you."

Bessie sat down, and Mrs Robinson commenced to take off her bonnet as she had done on that January night when first she saw her.

“Why dear, dear, you must have lost your senses, my deary, to go bringing me this money,” she said.

“Have I?” Bessie replied, looking vaguely round the room, “have I? Will you let me die here?”

“Die! no, you mustn’t talk of dying, poor dear,” said the landlady, putting half a wine-glassful of brandy to the thin, pale lips.

“No, thank you,” said Bessie, shaking her head.

“Yes, dear, yes, poor dear, you must take it,” said the woman.

“Must I?” Bessie replied, sipping the necessary medicine.

“There, there’s a dear—you will soon be well now.”

“Shall I?” said Bessie, smiling faintly. “May I go upstairs—upstairs?”

“Lor, love your heart, yes,” said the woman.

“May I die there, and be carried away?”

“No, no, dear, not yet.”

“Not carried away like baby was?” said Bessie, pushing her hair back from her forehead, and fixing her eyes upon the landlady.

“Don’t ’e talk so, don’t ’e now,” said the landlady, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

“Shall I be saved?” the woman went on. “Will he be saved? Would it be wrong to lie down in the river and die,—in the river where the moon is shining?”

The woman was rapidly becoming delirious. Mrs Robinson rang the bell for the bar-woman, and they carried the poor lost one to bed—the poor lost woman, so altered, so thin, such sunken eyes, such a weak, strange voice.

“Did you know I was to be Queen—Queen of the May?” she asked after a while, when the doctor had been sent for.

“Poor dear,” was all the landlady could say.

“It *shall* be a wreath of May-blossoms,”

said the suffering woman, smiling, "yes, pure white May; yes, yes. Oh, if he could but see me then: that fine gentleman, Richard!"

The bar-woman looked at the landlady and shook her head.

"Yes," the woman continued, "yes, dear, and as soon as ever the sun is up I will be up too, and we will soon gather the flowers."

The landlady took the thin hand in hers and chafed it, and then whispered to the bar-woman to run and tell them to send for another doctor—the first one they could find, or else it would be too late.

"It is, it is," said the dying woman, starting up, "it is Richard."

"Ah, curse him, curse him!" said the landlady aside in a whisper; "the curse of heaven be upon all such."

"Yes, his hand is in mine;" and then the mind wandered back to simple childhood. "No, granma dear, you must not be angry, don't be angry with Richard;

he will soon be back again, soon be back."

"Poor dear," said Mrs Robinson, falling upon her knees, "poor dear, she's dying."

Bessie paused for a moment, and then it was May-day again with her. She smiled, and putting out her thin hand, waved it gently as if in recognition of some unseen person.

"Yes," she said, still smiling, "I will be down in a moment. What a beautiful morning! The sun shines upon the sea yonder, like gold and silver. How delightful to be Queen of the May—to be Queen of the May, with a pure white crown—to be Queen of—"

A merciful Providence had permitted the erring soul to wander out into the great future, through the flower-strewn meadows of that memorable May morning, which was the sweetest, the happiest, of that poor lost life.

"It was a good omen," said the land-

lady, as she closed the darkened eyes and sobbed. "She died happy, if she never was happy before—poor soul, poor soul."

May we trust that some good angel had power in those last moments; and that the sin which came after that happy spring had been sufficiently punished by its ever attendant bitters.

Let us see what some other persons belonging to this history were doing on this same evening when Bessie Martin passed away. Perhaps it was well, both for the happiness of the Greys and the Masseys, that they never knew what became of Bessie, the sweets of whose young life were so soon changed to bitters, the nature of which we have only dared to indicate.

Mr Grey and his wife were at home in the little dining-room, which Frank had furnished in that long past time.

George Grey had just explained to

Sarah his latest scheme for the release of their son Richard. He had obtained great influence in his behalf both at home and in the colonies.

"I think we shall succeed," said George Grey cheerfully, "I think we shall."

"Pray heaven we may," said Mrs Grey.

"I met poor old Foster yesterday, the father of that miserable son; the man stopped me, and told me who he was. He says he is almost reduced to poverty."

"Ah, I blame a great deal of Richard's disgrace to that Peter Foster," said Mrs. Grey.

"The magistrates have closed that den of Keen's."

"Yes, it's always the way, George," said Mrs Grey a little petulantly, "they lock up the stable when the horse is gone."

"Well, well, you must cheer up, my dear," said George, "we shall have our son back again yet."

“Cheer up, I do cheer up; but at our time of life, George, hope gets weaker every day; I have almost given up hoping.”

The truth is, that if it had not been for some acts of insubordination, Richard Grey would have been released a year previous to this conversation; for George Grey had powerful friends, and his petitions had been prepared with a great deal of care and discretion.

Whilst these two sat talking of their wicked son, Bessie Martin, you see, was dying in that poor little inn by the Docks. It is well we do not know all that is passing around us. It was well for Luke Howard and Laura Grainger that the Tyneborough banker knew nothing of that house by the Dock-basin at Maryport. For on that very day Luke and Laura were married—on that very day when Mrs Robinson went to the sexton and set that passing-bell going in the church over the river, Tyneborough bells were clashing

and clanging in celebration of the marriage of Luke Howard to Laura Grainger.

The wedding was brought about in this way. You have heard that Laura left Tyneborough, and sent remittances for the support of her father's family, from London. For a time people were curious about Laura's metropolitan engagements; but by degrees they forgot to be inquisitive, and the Graingers did not care to talk about their benefactress. So Laura disappeared and was forgotten, except by Luke Howard and old Mentz.

The bankers frequently talked of her, and old Mentz was particularly earnest in his praises of the wolf's daughter.

"To think," he would say, "of that hypocrite having such a daughter. Did ever any one hear of a wolf being father to a lamb before?"

"She was like her mother, Mentz," Luke would say; "my poor dad used to say he never saw a mother living again so really in a daughter."

“Ah, Luke, thou shouldst have married that woman; thou shouldst, lad. I can’t say that I altogether agree with young fellows marrying, but I should not have been sorry to see thee married years ago to Laura Grainger. And now that thou’rt getting up in years, though thou art thirty years younger than me, I should like to see thee married and treading in thy father’s footsteps.”

“Well done, Mentz,” Luke would say, laughing, and leaning lazily back in his chair, “well done, Mentz.”

“It’s true, Luke, quite true.”

“Bachelor’s advice! No, no, Mentz, I’m not a marrying man,” Luke would say with a sigh, in memory of the strange woman of Southampton Street.

But Time had done much for Luke in this matter: a good kind friend is Time. He had gathered mists about Southampton Street in which he had enveloped that little dark figure over the way; he had made her but a memory to Luke—some-

thing like a vision of a turbulent passion, that had spent itself with its own fury. But there was left behind, for long, the blunted rankling of its spent fury—a dull kind of pleasant sadness: a sadness to be thought of, over a cigar, a kind of sadness that is sweetened by the knowledge that the passion is over, that it was strangely sweet whilst it lasted. Mixed with this was a lazy kind of wonderment. What had become of that fascinating little face? What was the mystery which had surrounded that strange, charitable woman? Whither did she go? Perhaps she was married now? Some one else had fallen in love with her—some one whom she could love in return; not a great hulk of a fellow like Luke Howard. Well, perhaps it was better it should be so.

Time had done much, very much, we say, for Luke Howard, as it has done for many another disappointed lover, who lives to find that what he took for heart-break was, perhaps, indigestion. Luke had

not forgotten Bessie; by no means. He sighed sometimes when he thought of her, and mixed him an extra glass of whiskey. But when he thought of her it was more in pity for her than for himself; in pity for her forlorn lot; and with a passing hope that she was happy in the love of a husband worthy of her generous heart.

Mr Mentz often talked to him about Laura Grainger, and Luke had promised to call upon her in town, and had done so on several occasions without success. He had obtained her address, and found that she occupied apartments in a good quarter of London. This was another mystery to Luke which puzzled him, and set him thinking about the wolf's fine daughter. What could she be doing? How could she obtain money enough to send fifteen pounds and more every month to that canting mother-in-law at Tyneborough?

This naturally set Luke a-thinking how clever she was; what an excellent

education she had, what agreeable manners, what a magnificent woman she was, and how much she justified old Mentz's encomiums.

"By Jove," he thought, "I believe old Mentz would propose to her himself if he were fifteen years younger,—ah, ah! capital joke—fancy old Mentz proposing to any one."

"Did you call, sir?" asked the waiter at The London.

"No," said Luke, holding half a glass of port wine between himself and the light.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the waiter, whisking the crumbs off the table, and carrying away the empty decanter.

"Hi—look here, Tom," said Luke, leaning back after the effort of emptying his glass.

"What's going on at the — Theatre?"

"Miss Leicester, sir, in the new drama of 'The Banker's Wife.'"

“Ha, is it good, Tom?”

“Uncommon, sir; seen nothin’ like it myself, sir. Miss Leicester, sir, they say she is the hactress of the age, sir.”

“Indeed! Ha! I’ve seen something of it in the papers. Clever woman, is she?”

“Uncommon clever, sir; the scene in which she discovers her husband’s crime, sir—well, it’s uncommon good, sir. She’s the banker’s wife, you know, sir; he’s a scoundrel, and she finds it out, and conceals his wickedness, sir, and reforms him, you know, and——”

“Yes, I see,” said Luke, in his lazy fashion; “bring me a cup of coffee.”

“Yes, sir.”

When Luke had taken his coffee he went to the —— Theatre, and his lethargic nature was once more roused into terrific activity. In Miss Leicester, who had taken the town by storm, he discovered Laura Grainger.

Need we say that in the presence of a thousand enthusiastic admirers who

cheered her to the echo, Luke suddenly discovered all her grace and beauty; suddenly saw that she was all that Mentz said she was, and much more; suddenly found himself savagely jealous of everybody in the theatre; suddenly found his fingers almost itching to take that sham lover of hers by the collar and hurl him into the orchestra.

With readers, whose imagination we must have taxed greatly in our prosy drama, we are sure we need not give a detailed account of the effect of this stage apparition upon poor Luke Howard. Of course he went into the refreshment-room and drank soda and brandy, and talked about Miss Leicester, and returned to his seat to rivet his eyes upon her; then out into the street to march about and wonder and wonder. Of course he stood at the stage door until her cab was called, and then dashed out upon her with "Laura, Laura," almost frightening her out of her wits. Of course she, who had acted so

well on the stage, could not act in real life, could not disguise her feelings of surprise and delight at sight of Luke. Of course he would see her home; and of course he was at her feet, before her supper was ready, praying her to be "The Banker's Wife" in earnest.

"But what will the Tyneborough people say?" Laura asked.

"Say, Laura, say — how? why?" Luke replied defiantly, as if he was prepared on the smallest possible notice to annihilate the whole Tyneborough race.

"At your marrying an actress," said Laura, with a little flash of triumph in her eye.

"O, hang Tyneborough," exclaimed Luke Howard.

"Very well, if Tyneborough has no objection, hang it by all means, Luke; for it was not very kind to me," said Laura, half jokingly, half seriously.

"Wasn't it? By Jove, Laura, it shall go down on its knees and beg your par-

don," said Luke, giving his whiskers a terrific pull, and starting himself at the pain.

"No, no, Luke, I do not care for that."

"But it shall, I say it shall," Luke exclaimed. "But above all, it is I who should be down on my knees!—to think I have not been there years ago! Suppose I had, just suppose I had, Laura, would you have had me? You always were a frank, noble, open-hearted girl—now tell me, tell me," said Luke, running on at such a rate, that Laura sat and wondered at him.

"I would, Luke," she answered, and giving him her hand.

"What a fool I've been—what a fool!—it's some punishment to know this now, though—some punishment to know how happy we might have been—and you to have been fighting your way alone, and without help."

"No, not without help, Luke, not

without help—and now you must answer me a question—will you?”

“A thousand, Laura; tell me to do anything, and I’ll do it.”

“Was it you who sent those bank notes—first anonymously to my mother-in-law, then to myself.”

“Never mind that now, Laura.”

“Did you send those notes, Luke?”
Laura asked, appealingly.

“I did,” said Luke, as if he were ashamed of the transaction.

“Bless you, Luke, God bless you; you will never know how acceptable they were—how necessary.”

The tears came into Laura’s eyes at the remembrance of her early struggles; but the shadow disappeared almost immediately.

Laura accepted Luke’s offer; and if you will inquire at Tyneborough you will find that she fulfilled her new engagement

as successfully as that which Luke had tempted her to relinquish.

When Mrs Grainger learnt how Laura had obtained that £15, which found its way to Tyneborough every month, she called the elect of Zebidee together, and with them traced out the working of the evil one in this last terrible affront to the faithful. And they returned thanks to heaven that the money now came from a better source—from the son of the man who was Mr Zebidee Grainger's friend !

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAST.

IN due time Mrs Massey became Mrs Thornhill, and she lived at Denby Rise, her gratitude and sympathy gradually ripening into a firm and happy affection and admiration for her husband.

We cannot say that Anna loved Harry Thornhill, as she had loved Paul Massey, in those early years; but she was happy and contented as Harry's wife. The past, as it gradually faded away in the distance, became more and more completely severed from the present, leaving but a dream-like memory behind. But there were bitters in this memory—bitters that could not altogether be changed, though they were neutralized by the sweets of the present.

Harry Thornhill was thoroughly happy. He was compensated for all his trials. He had been weighed in the balance, and not found wanting. His honour, his honesty, his love—all had been tested by a fiery ordeal, and he had come out of it true and pure. Sometimes when he looked at that glorious sea, which lashed the rocks at Denby as it always had done, he could not help a passing shudder at the remembrance of that dreadful night when he found himself struggling for life in the water; he could never forget that sensation of rising and falling, and being blinded with spray; that tossing about of distant lights; those fitful gleams from the moon, and that awakening in the Denby Caverns. But the shudder was momentary, and memory soon dwelt upon happier days—when he and Anna and her uncle wandered about the beach in search of shells. Then to turn his head and encounter Anna's contented smile, and to know that he had won her admiration and esteem, her brightest

possible regard—perhaps her love—that was enough for Harry now ; to know that he had found rest at last, to know that he and Anna would go down the hill of life together—this was sweet indeed.

It was but a very short time after Mr and Mrs Thornhill took up their residence at Denby Rise, that little curly-headed, bright-eyed children, whose parents lived at Oak House, Summerdale, came on happy visits in the summer time to the Helswick coast. These little ones called Mr and Mrs Thornhill grandma and grandpa ; grandma and grandpa took great delight in watching them fish up weed amongst the rock-pools by the sea, and grandpa used to aid them in the construction of miniature lakes and oceans in the sand.

Other visitors were also received, with delight, at Denby Rise, of whom we shall have something to say, by and by.

Meanwhile a parting word with the Greys seniors, and some other of the actors whom we have invoked.

Mr and Mrs Grey continued to occupy the old house at Purdown. They had often talked of going abroad to live near Richard Grey's place of confinement; but Frank had persuaded them out of the idea. Mr Frank had suggested the desirability of their giving up Tristram Lodge and taking a larger house; but they would never hear of that. George said they preferred Purdown, for many reasons, and they liked Maryport, because it was a bustling town, and had attractions which helped to fill up the time, and prevented Mrs Grey from thinking too much about her wretched son. She was an old woman now, and it was George's constant care to make her declining days happy. There was a fine theatre at Maryport, and concerts were frequently given; and George would often take his wife to these entertainments, which she enjoyed. Then, being near the sea, they could have pleasant trips in the summer; but, above all, it was better that they should live where they

did, because it was easier to communicate with New Zealand from Maryport than from any other place. Old George knew captains and others, who occasionally carried messages for him. One of these men always spent a few weeks at Tristram Lodge when his ship came to Maryport. He was a good fellow, and had interested himself very much in the convict son. It soothed and comforted Mrs Grey to hear the captain talk of Richard as a fine, big, manly fellow—"a handsome fellow, madam, upon my honour, and a spirited fellow, too, and it's a pity he got into bad company; and you must not despair, Mrs Grey, you will see him again yet."

How different the lot of Richard Grey to that of Bessie Martin! Richard, who had blighted and destroyed that young life, had the love of a fond mother to the last; had friends ready and anxious to terminate his just punishment. Bessie—well we know how she lived and died. We shall not know how it fared with

Richard Grey in the end. For we leave him still a convict, and we leave his father still occupied with schemes for his release; we leave his mother still hoping that he will come back to her. We can hazard a shrewd guess that he never did return, and it is not necessary we should say that his punishment was great, though we cannot admit, with Mrs Grey, that it was more than he deserved.

Soon after the convict ship sailed from England, Mat Dunkum followed it, working his passage out. After hanging about the convict establishment for months, and running great risks of starvation, he obtained employment there, sufficient to occupy him and to procure him food. The last news of him which reached George Grey were to the effect that he had been shot whilst attempting to procure Richard Grey's release, by physical force.

Joseph Wittle and his wife spent a week with Joseph's sister in Southampton

Street; and Mrs Wittle was forming a lasting affection for Mrs Jenkins, when that affection was abruptly broken. On the third evening, shortly after Mrs Wittle was dressed ready to accompany her husband to the play, that buxom Summerdale landlady had occasion to return to her room. As she entered it Mrs Jenkins screamed, and began struggling with the dress which Mrs Wittle had only just taken off. For a moment Mrs W. could not account for Mrs Jenkins's extraordinary conduct. She was writhing and jumping and groaning, and all the time tossing about Mrs Wittle's dress. Then suddenly she thought of the private pocket and the fish-hooks.

"It was quite by accident, quite, quite; oh, don't call my brother," said the poor little pinched-up sister of Joseph Wittle.

"It's them fish-hooks, oh dear, oh dear," said Mrs Wittle, bursting out into a violent perspiration.

"Fish-hooks!" said Mrs Jenkins, in an agony of despair.

"I'd sooner ha' given you all the money, Mrs Jenkins," said poor Mrs Wittle, taking up the dress, and proceeding to cut the pocket out.

"Oh dear, oh dear," groaned Mrs Jenkins.

"There," said Mrs Wittle, releasing the dress from the pocket, and cutting out the money, "you shan't have it now, Mrs Jenkins; but you had better go to a doctor at once, and I promise you I'll never tell Joseph."

And she never did tell Joe, though he asked her twenty times that night why she was not enjoying herself as much as usual. At the play she laughed when she should have cried, and cried when she should have laughed. When the end came, and they went out with the smell of the blue fire, Mrs Wittle could not eat more than six oysters, and as for the stout, half a glass was quite enough for her.

“Wothever is the matter, ducky,” said Joe, “wothever is it? Ain’t yer well, my sweet, or wot?”

“I’m quite well, Joseph,” said Mrs W., beaming her best smile upon him.

“And happy, my Rosebud?”

“And happy, Joseph,” she replied.

“Well, I can’t say as yer a-showing of it to-night, my love.”

“I can’t always be eating oysters and drinking porter, Joe.”

“Well, there’s something in that; right you are, my dear; that didn’t occur to me before; we’ll change the diet; waiter, some chops and kidneys.”

But chops and kidneys are of little use to a troubled mind. Mrs Jenkins on her knees to Mrs Wittle, declaring that “it was only a little idle curiosity,” and begging for her regard, was more consolation to Mrs Wittle than chops and kidneys; for Mrs Wittle believed the little woman, and she was right in believing her, though she could not take her into her affection (as

she had wished to do), after what had taken place. It is to be hoped that the occurrence was a lasting lesson to Mrs Jenkins, and that she always remembered fish-hooks when one of her inquisitive fits took possession of her. Joe provided her with a little annual sum, which was a great assistance to her, and Mrs Stubbs used to accompany her neighbour to the Bank, where the money was payable, once in every six months, Mrs Stubbs agreeing with the little woman that it was sometimes a great blessing to have rich relations.

Joseph Wittle and his round rubicund wife continued to maintain the respect and regard of the Summerdale people, and in due time the railway came within three miles of the old town, which brought more visitors to the place, and increased the revenues of the Crown.

Our story ends at the place where it began—at Denby Rise.

The silver chimes, as we heard them

on a Summer Sunday morning, in Mr Mountford's life-time, were again travelling over the water and climbing the rocks, and murmuring in at the windows of Denby Rise.

In the library they found Mr and Mrs Thornhill dressed for church, and talking happily to Frank Grey, who stood there with two merry little ones tugging at his coat, and telling him to "tome and see de pretty flowers." In Mrs Frank Grey's own room the chimes, after struggling through quite a forest of mignonette, found Kate and Laura talking of old times; talking of Tyneborough and Pentworth and of Luke Howard. This latter gentleman, who had been induced to visit Denby with his wife and their little son, was at the same time lying on his back, and without his coat, on the drawing-room hearth-rug, whilst that little son was crawling over him, and pulling his big curly whiskers. The chimes might wander for many miles before they could find a happier household than that of

Denby Rise; and yet all those people had their bitters as well as their sweets. Who would think they had tasted of the former, to look at them, scattered about that gabled house, with the silver chimes murmuring through the flowers.

In the afternoon the chimes met all our friends on their way to the church—with the tall tapering spire that points heavenward, in the midst of the bell music. Mr and Mrs Thornhill first, walking happily arm in arm, with their grandchild running before; Mr and Mrs Howard, next; Mr and Mrs Frank Grey, last. May the chimes always find them and theirs as happy, as contented, as we see them passing under the old porch of Helswick church!

We wave a mute farewell to them, whilst the sun is setting upon the painted windows and the organ is pealing in the sanctuary. We are sorry to leave them now that they are happy and at peace; we linger about the porch where the music

comes streaming out into the still calm evening; we are almost tempted to wait until the benediction is given, and walk home with them by that quiet golden sea; walk by them to that house in the valley and hear them talk of other days.

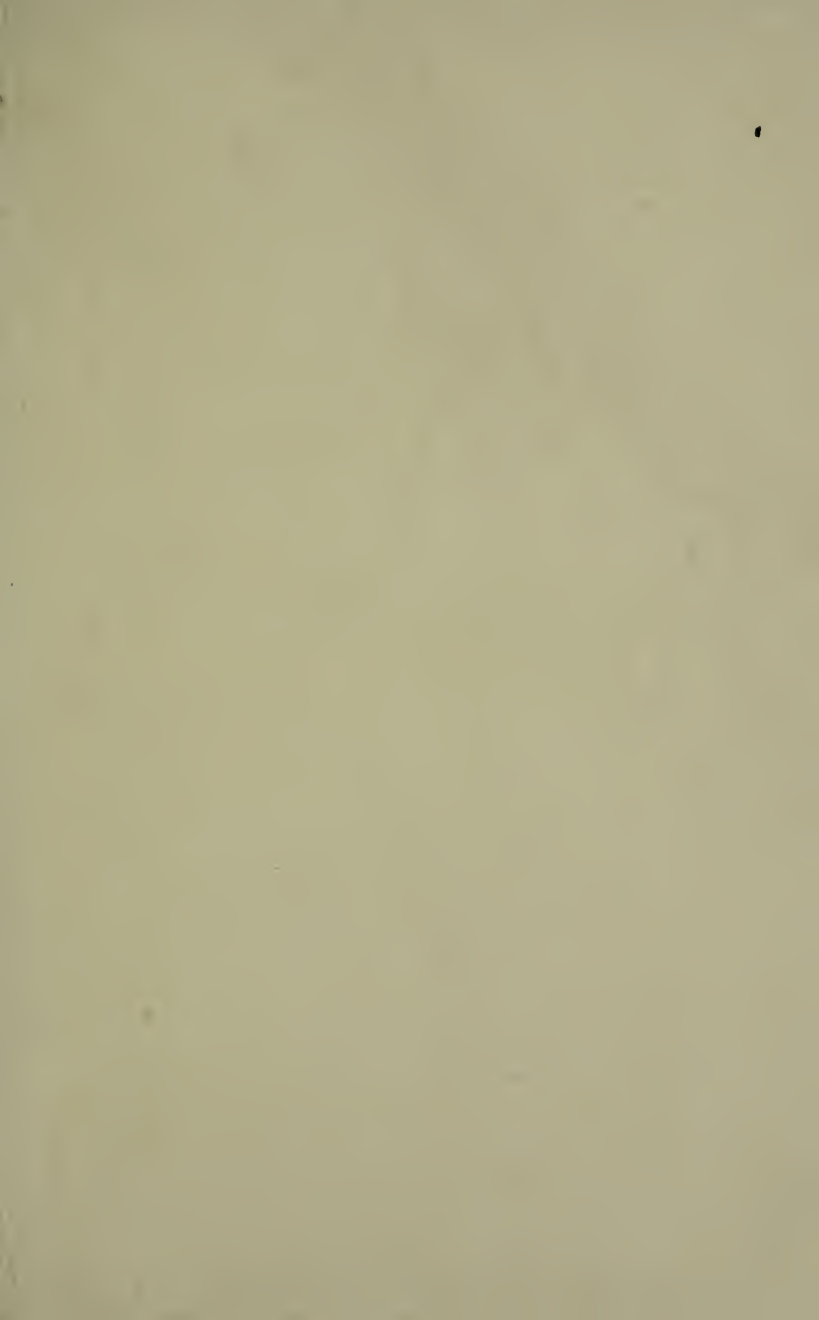
But with the sunset has come the time for parting. The only hope that is left us now is that our readers may be as loth to leave Helswick and Denby as we are. If they complain that there are more bitters than sweets in this history, shall we not say that so much the closer to real life are the pictures we have drawn, and the incidents we have narrated?

May the bitters of our lives, dear friends, be followed by sweets enough to make the end happy and peaceful!

THE END.







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